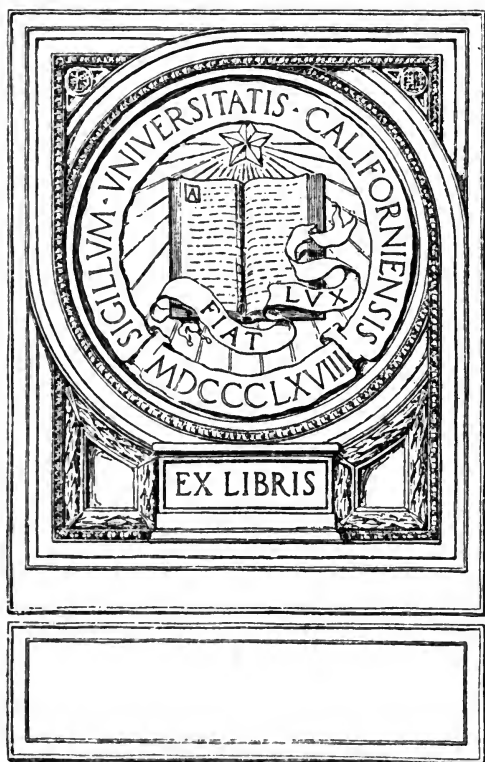


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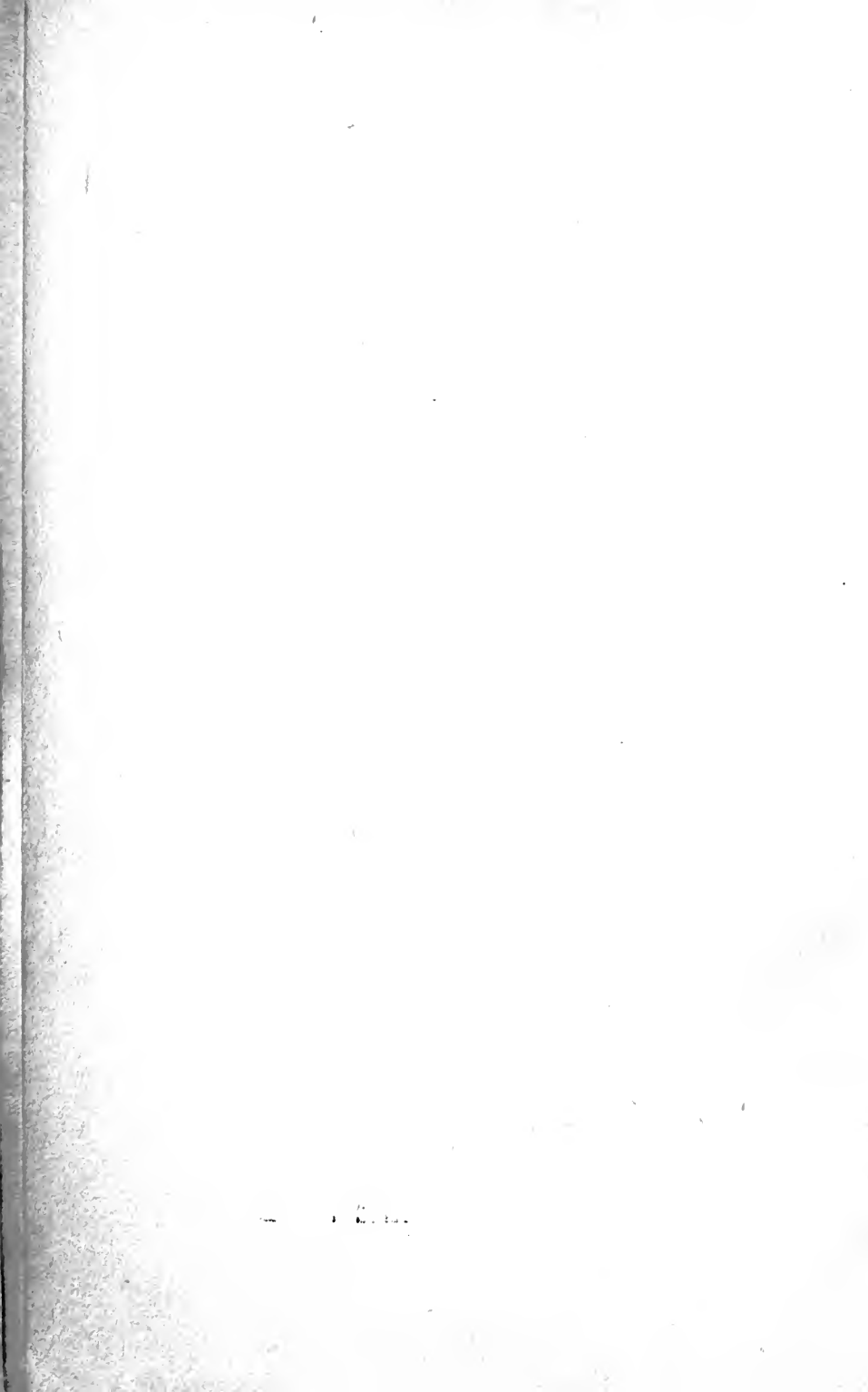
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**ROBESPIERRE
AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED**





Robespierre

ROBESPIERRE AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

BY

HECTOR FLEISCHMANN

AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH

BY

DR. ANGELO S. RAPPOPORT

AUTHOR OF

"THE CURSE OF THE ROMANOV," "ROYAL LOVERS AND MISTRESSES," "MAD MAJESTIES,"
"LEOPOLD II.," ETC.

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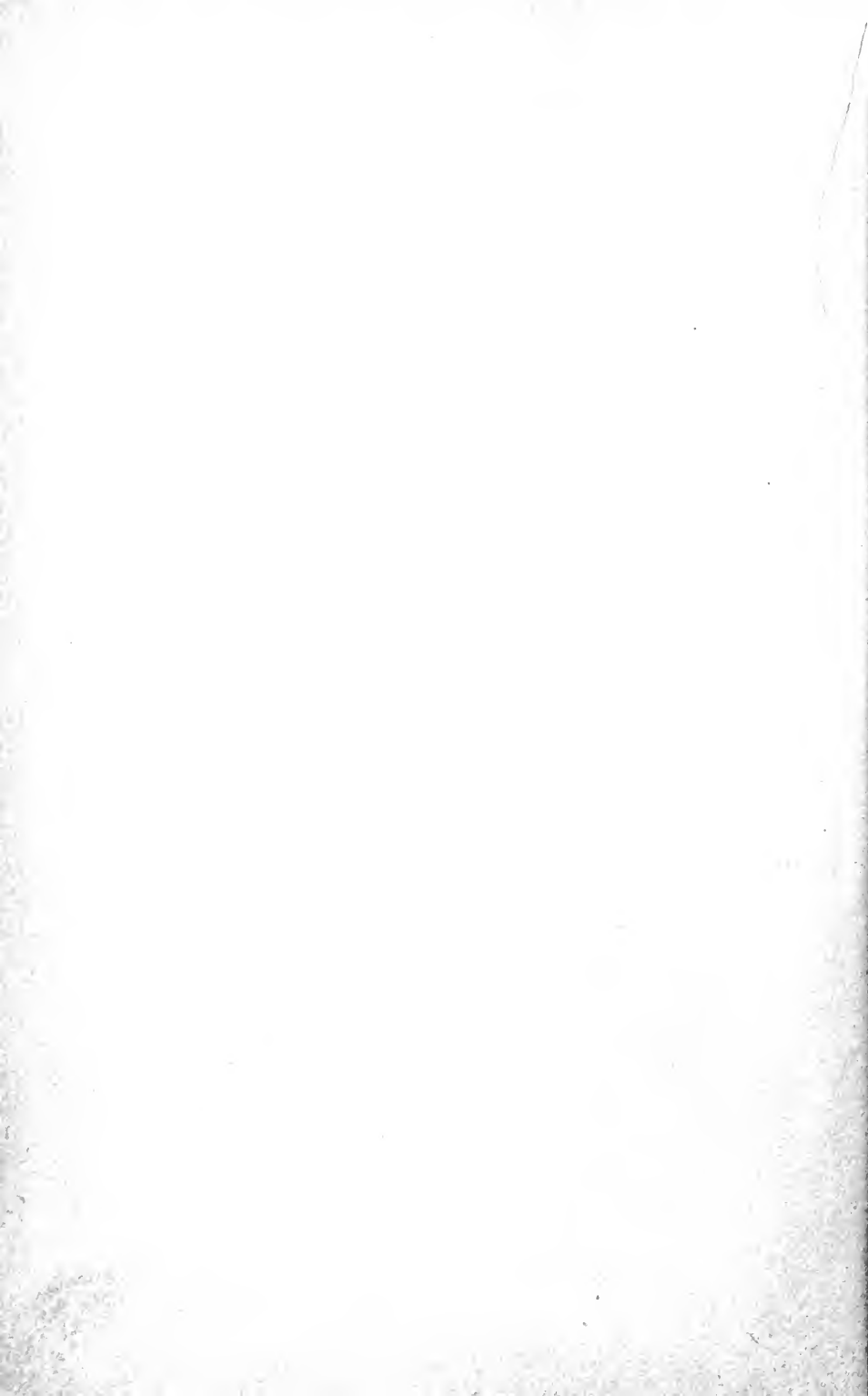
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BOOK I

**THE SENTIMENTAL AND AMOROUS YOUTH
OF ROBESPIERRE**



ROBESPIERRE

AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

I

THE INFLUENCE OF THE NATIVE LAND

THE life of Robespierre breathes that majestic sadness of tragedy of which Jean Racine speaks so divinely. It reflects something of that passionate and melancholy spirit so closely in harmony with the landscapes of the province of Artois. Whoever has visited the valleys of that peaceful country, traversed by rivers, besprinkled with green hamlets, and guarded by belfries, like so many mute sentinels, must have been gripped by the power of the mortal beauty of these landscapes and by their charm of unspeakable nostalgia. On these borders of the French Flanders, Spanish bands, hurled into the Low Countries, had left an indelible impression, the deep traces of their turbulent passage. They had stamped the Flemish soil with their violent and brutal seal. The Latin spirit, which

Roman conquest had brought as far as the Iberian shores, pushed forward by Spanish fury towards Flanders, took root in this country, and moulded and fashioned the souls of the inhabitants. For those who reflect upon the influence of environment, the civic virtue of Maximilien Robespierre is no longer a problem ; it takes its origin far beyond the classical studies of college and University. Many are the revolutionary souls easily explained by the influence of education and the discipline of their native land. From white and torrid Carcassonne Fabre d'Églantine has his vivacity, his malice, and his ardour ; from Puy-de-Dôme, rough and bleak, Couthon brings his obstinate prudence ; Saint-Just owes his burning coldness, his taste for order and clearness, to his native Oise ; whilst stammering Camille Desmoulins has the lively and alert spirit of Picardy. On all these men of the Revolution, whether they hailed from happy and indolent Île-de-France, from noble and peaceful Vendômois, or from the bright and impulsive South, the native scenery and landscapes impose their influence and fashion their minds. Through the eloquence of Robespierre Róme manifests herself, just as the Greece of the mother of the two Chéniers is uttering her heroic cry in the "Chant du Départ." For

Rome had left behind something of herself and of her spirit in this province of Artois. She is an exile in the cold and prolific country, and Robespierre, the inheritor of the homeless Roman spirit, triumphed over himself and over his own race. It was in the midst of those uniform valleys, rolling the waves of their ripe harvests towards the sea, under a sky heavy with hidden sadness, that the Roman and Jacobin soul of the future Dictator was fashioned. It was there that it became impregnated with the harshness of an eloquence at once burning and severe ; it was there that the Flemish soul, still bearing the traces of Spanish impression, allied itself in a supreme effort to the Latin spirit, as "was manifested," to use the expression of an illustrious author, "by the eloquence of French thought." But in Maximilien Robespierre the Roman spirit became paramount, subduing and conquering the Spanish character, fashioning the soul of him who was destined one day to assert the loftiness and nobility of his civic virtue on the slimy boards of the scaffold of Thermidor. Visit Arras in the autumn, follow those grey and somnolent streets, the deserted squares, where the gold of the last leaves is turning rusty, go down the boulevards designed by Vauban,

contemplate the esplanade just as the sudden twilight is descending upon the poplars bending in the wind, and you will understand why that poignant melancholy weighed upon and overwhelmed the soul of Robespierre, even in the hour of his most feverish Jacobin triumph.

It was there that he came to dream in solitude, escaping from the solemnity of the courts of justice of Artois. He well remembered his melancholy walks in after-years, when he wrote: "Those who have to decide the destinies of nations should isolate themselves from their own work."

Silence and solitude met him in those valleys where once—in 1654—the clash of arms of Spanish troops and the bands of Turenne had resounded. Now he was surrounded by an atmosphere of peace, his gaze meeting a vast horizon, an example of sober simplicity. This peaceful atmosphere he knew before his departure for Paris, and he found it again on his return. He had come back full of admiration for the ancient grandeur of Rome, but also anxious for his own future, still hesitating in his choice between the peaceful, mediocre life of a country magistrate and an unknown future full of adventures. From what we know of his

existence in those days, he seems to have resigned himself to a life of peace.

But the first encounter between France and royalty had suddenly taken place, and people vaguely began to guess that a struggle similar to that of the ancient Roman republics against tyrants was at hand. It was then that the influence of his native soil and of environment upon Robespierre made itself felt; it was then that he triumphed over himself and over his race. And henceforth he faithfully reflected the image of the province where he was born; he reflected it in his sober speeches, in his proud and melancholy eloquence, in his life and his conduct. It was Rome who manifested herself through the voice of this provincial lawyer.

II

THE ORPHAN

THE Rue des Rats-Porteurs, now called Rue des Rapporteurs, is close to the Place de la Comédie at Arras. A long, crooked, dark street, at the end of which, and at the corner of a little street lit by a smoky lantern, stands a one-storied grey house. Three steps lead to the door; the house contains six high, narrow windows, five of which are on the ground-floor and provided with ill-fitting shutters. The whole place has an air of sadness; it is grey and lugubrious, melancholy and distressing. Here lived Maximilien de Robespierre.

The Robespierres had been settled in Arras since 1720, at which date Maximilien Derobespierre had fixed on the town as his place of residence. In 1731 this same Maximilien married Marie-Marguerite Poiteau, who in the following year, on February 17, 1732, gave birth to Maximilien - Barthélemy - François, who on December 30, 1756, was an advocate at the

Council of Artois, and on June 2, 1758, married Jacqueline - Marguerite Carraut, daughter of Jacques-François, brewer of the Rue Ronville, and of Marie-Marguerite Cornu.

There were five children of this union, the first being born on May 6, 1758. The following is his baptismal certificate :

“ On the 6th May, one thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight, was baptized by me, the undersigned, Maximilien - Marie - Isidore, born on the said day, at two o'clock in the morning, in lawful wedlock, of Maître Maximilien-Barthélemy-François Derobespierre, advocate of the Council of Artois, and of Dame Jacqueline Carraut. The godfather being Maître Maximilien Derobespierre, paternal grandfather, advocate of the said Council of Artois, and the godmother Dame Marie - Marguerite Cornu, wife of Jacques - François Carraut, maternal grandmother. Whose signatures are appended :

“ DEROBESPIERRE.	MARIE-MARGUERITE
DEROBESPIERRE.	CORNU.
	LENGLADE, <i>Curé.</i> ”

This was the future member of the Convention.

Two years later there was another birth. On February 8, 1760, was born Marie-Marguerite-Charlotte, the daughter who survived the family

disasters, and lived until 1834. Then in the space of three years three more births occurred. On December 28, 1761, Henriette-Eulalie-Françoise was born ; on January 21, 1736, Augustin-Bon-Joseph ; and on July 7, 1764, a stillborn child. The birth of the latter proved fatal to the mother, who died nine days later. The funeral service was celebrated with pomp in the parish church of Saint-Aubert, the following notice of which may be seen in the register :

“ On the 16th July, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-four, died Dame Marguerite-Jacqueline Carraut, aged twenty-nine or thereabouts, wife of Maître Maximilien-Barthélemy-François Derobespierre, advocate of the provincial and higher Council of Artois. The service took place on the 17th, and was followed by the burial in this church, in the presence of Antoine-Henry Galhant, knight of the royal and military order of Saint-Louis, holding the commission of Lieutenant-Major of the Fortress of Arras, and of Auguste-Isidore Carraut, brother of the deceased, who signed with us, the curé.

“ GALHAUT.

CARRAUT. DE LACROIX, *Curé.*”

The husband was overwhelmed by his wife's death ; the rest of his life is shrouded in mystery.

He disappeared from Arras, travelled, was lost sight of, and never reappeared. He died—"I do not know in what country," says Charlotte Robespierre, but according to Ernest Hamel his death took place at Munich.

On their mother's death the eldest of the orphaned children, Maximilien, was not yet seven.

As we have seen, the Robespierres were a family of lawyers. The grandfather was an advocate, the great-grandfather a notary at Carvin. In nearly all the courts of Artois a Robespierre had pleaded, and, in accordance with a fiscal decree of November, 1696, the family arms were—"Or, with a sable band, charged with a demi-vol argent."

It would seem that this might settle the question of noble birth.

"Robespierre was not, like Mirabeau, a deserter from the nobles," writes M. Hamel; "his father and grandfather signed their name *Derobespierre*." Undoubtedly this signature may be seen on certain acts, but one finds also that of *Porteau de Robespierre*, wife of the grandfather, on Charlotte's baptismal certificate, and that of *Eulalie de Robespierre* appended to Augustin's baptismal certificate. And does not Robespierre himself use the *de*? are not all the

letters of his youth signed thus ? and does not the signature *de Robespierre* appear even on the document of the *Jeu de Paume* exhibited in the museum of national archives ? He belonged to the bar merely, so be it ; but in those days was not the nobility of the bar equal to that of the sword ?

Their father's departure left the children in need, or almost. Maximilien, says Alissan de Chazet, inherited no patrimony, and Montjoye, whom one must quote with caution, also assures us that the children were in " absolute poverty." This poverty has certainly been exaggerated, and the fable, spread abroad later, " that Maximilien had known want in his childhood, calls forth a protest from Charlotte Robespierre, who declares those who say it to be imposters.

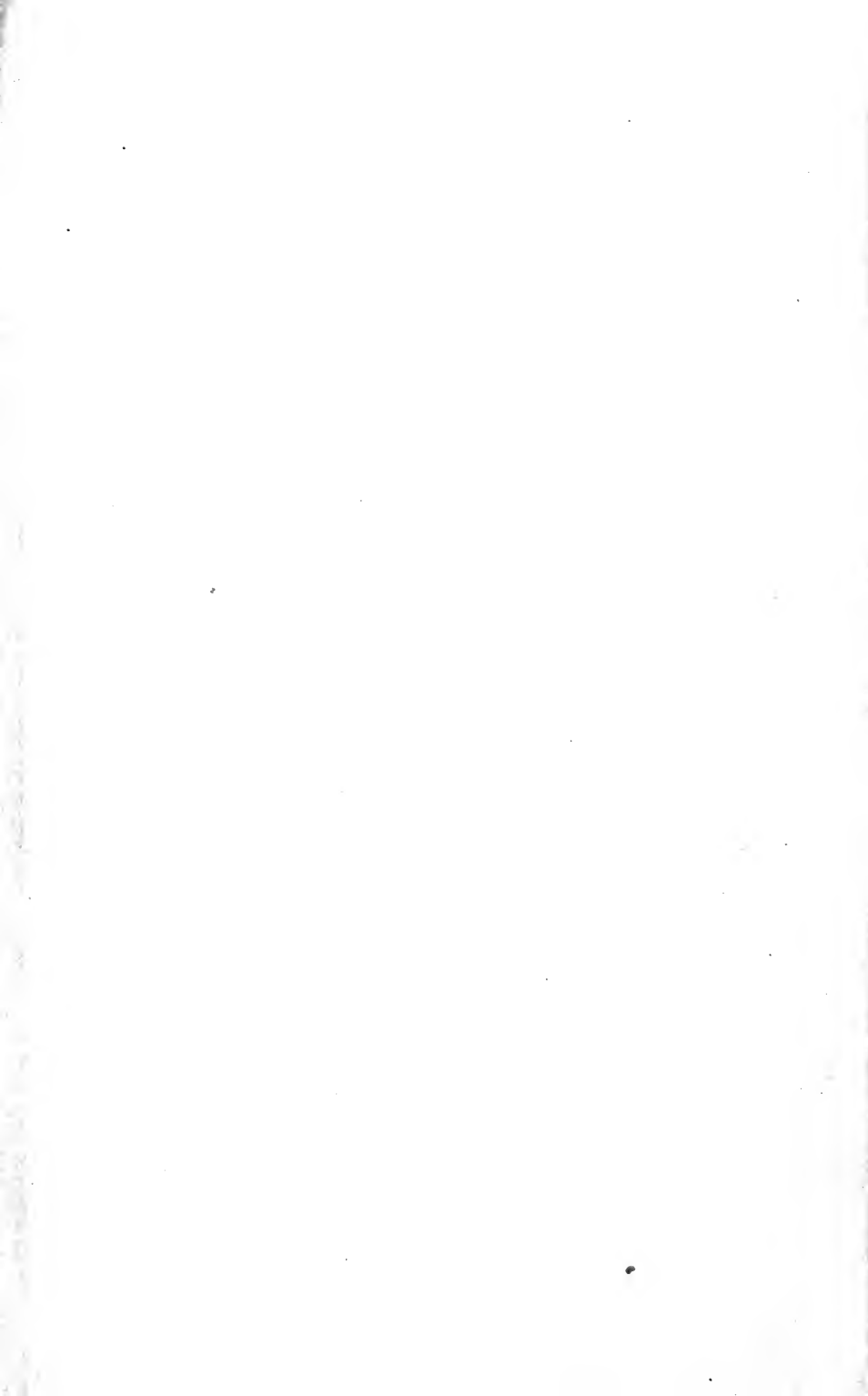
Whatever the truth may be, the family had to come to the rescue of the children. M. de Robespierre's sisters, Eléonore-Eulalie and Aldégonde-Henriette, took charge of the two girls, who were afterwards sent to the Convent des Manarres, Tournai, and the two boys were taken by their maternal grandmother, Françoise Carraut.

Maximilien began his schooling at Arras, at a college of which M. de la Borère was the head.



MIRABEAU

To face page 20



He remained there until the close of the scholastic year, 1768-69.

Nicolas le Candrelier, Abbot of Saint-Waast, had founded a college in Paris during the fourteenth century. This establishment was suppressed in the eighteenth century, and supplanted by the College of Louis-le-Grand. The Abbots of Saint-Waast were given four scholarships in the new establishment by way of compensation. At the request of the Bishop, M. de Conzié, a friend of the Robespierres, one of these scholarships was given to Maximilien by the Abbot of Saint-Waast, Dom Briois d'Hulluch.

Maximilien reached Paris at the beginning of the scholastic year, 1769-70, and the door of the dark building in the Rue Saint-Jacques closed upon the young orphan, whose life had opened so bitterly amid grief and abandon. He found there youths of his own age, gay, laughing, joyous, unheeded of the future which held their terrible fates. Here was Fréron, the future orator of the people—Fréron, who died almost in exile at San Domingo; Dupont-Dutertre, who was to become Minister of Justice, and die by the guillotine on 8 Frimaire, year II. Sacrificed to the guillotine, too, would be the young scholar Camille Desmoulins; and to what a horrible death was destined Suleau, the pam-

phleteer of the "Actes des Apôtres." Maximilien came among these joyous youths a sorrowful, serious, melancholy child. One of his comrades, an emigrant priest (one feels that such evidence is suspect), said of him that he was a "bad, sullen boy" (*ein boeser tuckischer knabe*).

This evidence is contradicted by another ecclesiastic, a Canon, who was Maximilien's schoolfellow at the College of Arras. "He was what you would call a good sort," he says simply. Another witness says: "As I knew him, he had a detestable character and an inordinate desire to rule;" but this is thermidorien evidence, and its credibility may be judged by the date at which it was given. Jules Janin goes farther—"Already so sad," he writes, "that he frightened his schoolfellows." But Jules Janin's estimate is fantastic and literary, and calls for more than our indulgence.

There can be no doubt, however, that Robespierre was an excellent pupil, who was held up as a model to the others, the phoenix of the college.

Abbé Hérivaux, his master of rhetoric, called him the Roman; twenty years later he proved himself worthy of the title.

The scholastic list, where he figures as Ludovicus - Franciscus - Maximilianus - Maria - Isi-

dorus de Robespierre, atrebas, e collegio Ludovici Magni, gives the number of his successes. In 1772, in the fourth form, he obtained the second prize for Latin composition, and sixth accessit for Latin translation ; in 1774, in the second form, fourth accessit for Latin verse and fourth accessit for Latin translation ; in 1775, in rhetoric, the second prize for Latin verse, the second prize for Latin translation, and the third accessit for Greek translation. In 1776, still in rhetoric, he obtained the fourth accessit for Latin translation.

It is the same throughout until 1781, when he left Louis-le-Grand with his diploma of licentiate of law. His conduct and application to study were so exemplary that the college presented him with a bonus of 600 francs as a mark of appreciation.

“*January 19, 1781.*—In accordance with the account rendered by the head-master of the eminent talents of M. de Robespierre, scholar of the College of Arras, who is about to conclude his studies ; of his good conduct during twelve years, and of his successes in class, both as to prizes obtained in the University and as to the examinations in philosophy and law—the Board has unanimously granted to M. de Robespierre a bonus of 600 francs, which will be paid

to him by the Grand-master of the Funds of the College of Arras ; and the said sum will be paid to the Grand-master's account, on his reporting the payment of the said bonus, and upon presenting the said M. de Robespierre's receipt."

And it was this scholar, to whom his masters pay homage in the sight of posterity, who became, we are told, a tiger and the most cruel of the Sardanapaluses of the Terror. A singular commencement to such an unfortunate career !

III

THE LAWYER

BEING now twenty-three, Robespierre returned to Arras a qualified lawyer, ready to take up a profession in which his ancestors had won fame. He returned, too, anxious to settle the future of his brother and his sister Charlotte. His first care was to write to the Abbot Comendatory of Saint-Waast, then Cardinal-Prince of Rohan, begging him to pass on to his brother Augustin the scholarship he had held at Louis-le-Grand; and his petition being granted, Augustin left Douai for Paris.

Maximilien then set to work, devoting himself to his profession with a vigour and dogged perseverance which never failed him. His life was peaceful and regular; according to a certain author, who is very careful to quote his references, he was reproached for his inability to laugh and his distressing caution.

Opinions of Robespierre are so distorted that his qualities are turned into vices; this is but

the beginning; we shall see later what legends grew round him.

Charlotte Robespierre gives some curious details upon this period of Maximilien's life. At six or seven in the morning he was up and at work in his study; at eight o'clock his hairdresser waited on him, and this habit he never lost. During the most stormy days of the Terror, a hairdresser waited daily upon the Incorruptible at the Duplays' house. His first meal concluded, during which he displayed an exemplary abstemiousness, he would return to work until it was time to go to the court. He wore an olive gown. After dinner he would go for a short walk, and then return to work; the later part of the evening he spent with friends. During these gatherings, however, he was frequently absent-minded, which called forth reproaches from his aunts. He would sit in meditation in an armchair at some distance from the guests, but occasionally, however, he would joke and laugh. His fits of absent-mindedness were sometimes amusing. Charlotte tells the following tale: "We had been spending the evening together at a friend's house," she says, "and were returning home at a somewhat late hour, when suddenly my brother, forgetting that he was escorting me,

quickenèd his pace, left me behind, reached home before me, and shut himself into his study. I came home a few minutes later. I was so amused at his absent-mindedness that, seeing him walk on ahead quickly, I let him go without reminding him of my presence. I went into his study, where I found him in his dressing-gown, working studiously. He asked me where I had come from alone and so late. I answered that, if I had come home alone, it was because he had left me in the middle of the streets to hurry home. He remembered then, and we both laughed at the comical adventure."

His room was simple and modestly furnished ; its books were the chief ornament. Here his friends came to see him : Leduc, a retired lawyer ; Aimé, Canon of the Cathedral of Arras, surnamed the Wise ; Devic, another Canon, formerly Professor of Louis-le-Grand's ; Buissart, who remained his friend until death ; Langlois, Charamant, and Ensart, young lawyers, his colleagues of the Society of the Rosatis ; and Fouché, an oratorian, who afterwards became famous. The future terrorist was then Professor of Philosophy at the Oratory, and his intimacy with Robespierre sprang from this. Was it at this time that he had experience of

what he calls in his memoirs the stubbornness, tenacity, the opportunism, of Maximilien ?

The young lawyer who had been called to the bar at Arras on November 8, 1781, already enjoyed a budding reputation ; the lawsuit of " the lightning-conductor " completed his fame.

A certain M. Vissery de Bois-Valé had had a lightning-conductor placed on his house, an instrument which since Franklin's discovery was not held in favour. In doing so he took advantage of the feudal law, which gave the lord of the manor the right to erect a weather-cock on his house. But an iron bar does not come under the heading of weathercocks, and it was generally believed that a conductor attracts lightning. Upon this point the whole of Saint-Omer rose in arms against M. de Vissery. He was summoned before the municipality, and was ordered to remove the conductor within twenty-four hours. M. de Vissery appealed against the sentence, and the Aldermen referred him to the Attorney-General. The defendant was once more defeated, and on May 31, 1783, appealed again, being defended on this occasion by Robespierre. The case came up this time on April 21, 1784, the lightning-conductor was victorious, and remained triumphantly on M. de Bois-Valé's

house. The whole of Artois was stirred by the incident; this was one of the young lawyer's great cases, the first step to his fame in the provinces. The case of François Deteuf, against the Grand Prior of the Abbey of Anchin, which came before the court on November 13, 1783, is not so well known in our time, but it was no less glorious for Maximilien. If we add to this his defence of Dupond, we have his chief victories won in the courts of Artois, where he pleaded frequently without asking a fee. This latter tribute is paid him by an enemy, a calumniator of his memory. How did he plead? In his careful defence, where logic was supported by legal texts and decrees, was there any sign of that glacial and cutting eloquence which at the bar of the Convention made him the living sword of an idea?

Let us appeal to his contemporaries. But among so many witnesses, how conflicting is the evidence! "His voice was agreeable, but rather high-pitched," says the actor Fleury. But Fleury's memoirs, suspect for many reasons, do not tell us what opportunities the actor had of hearing the member of the Convention. The same thing applies to Montjoye, who declares that Maximilien "could never be ranked

even among mediocre barristers." But Robespierre's well-known speeches are powerful witnesses against this statement. Another speaks of his "weak voice, although from long habit in speaking at the bar he had come to speak with ease." Philarète Chasles is the most indulgent, and speaks of the Incorruptible's "modulated tones." His memoirs refer to Robespierre as a "barrister of fine intelligence." But Chasles was born during the Directoire, and so it would seem that an article published in the *Nouvelles Politiques*, on 13 Thermidor, three days after Robespierre's fall, and attributed to the ex-academician Suard, is more trustworthy. Robespierre's voice is the subject of two special comments. "In his speech, now harmoniously modulated, now harsh, sometimes, even often, trivial, there was always a commonplace under-current." And, again, "He knew how to soften his naturally harsh and sharp voice, and to impart grace to his provincial accent." Here, under the cloak of blame is a tribute to a powerful and learned elocution, and praise of an orator before whom his audience speedily forgot to laugh, overwhelmed by the strength and conviction of his ideas.

It is as a lawyer that we will first study Robespierre in his relations to women. From

these relations love is absent, but there is nevertheless a certain polite and polished gallantry, which is an interesting revelation. The three letters which we are about to quote were enclosed with certain reports relating to events which it is difficult to trace, but they were obviously events little calculated to charm women, because we find Robespierre making excuses for sending them. Poet—because, as we shall see later, he was a poet—he would have preferred to address them in verse; but he is above all a lawyer, and as such he has less chance of being read. See with what gallant tact he sets to work; it is surely the case of saying, with the comic man: “There is a smell of the nation about all this, and Frenchmen have a note of gallantry which permeates everything!”

This first letter is famous. It is known as the *lettre des serins*, and was addressed, in all probability, to Mlle. Dehay, one of Charlotte Robespierre’s best friends. It is his first composition, upon which, without repetition, he afterwards embroidered charming variations:

“MADEMOISELLE,

“I have the honour of sending you a report upon an interesting subject. Such homage may be rendered to the Graces themselves,

when to their other fascinations they join the gift of being able to think and feel, and when they are alike worthy of conferring happiness and of mourning disaster.

“Talking of so important a subject, shall I be pardoned, Mademoiselle, if I speak of canaries? No doubt I shall be if the canaries are interesting; and coming from you, could they fail to be? They are very pretty, and, being bred by yourself, we expected them to be the most gentle and sociable of canaries. What was our surprise when, upon approaching the cage, they threw themselves against the bars with an impetus which made us fear for their lives! They recommence this performance every time they see the hand that feeds them. What plan of education did you adopt for them, and how have they acquired this savage character? Do the doves that the Graces rear for the chariot of Venus display this wild temperament? Such a face as yours should surely have familiarized without difficulty your canaries with the human face. Or is it that, after seeing yours, they cannot tolerate any other? I beg of you to explain this phenomenon. Meanwhile, with all their faults, we shall always find them lovable. My sister begs me to express her thanks for your kindness in sending her this

present, and to assure you of the affection with which you have inspired her.

"I am, with respect, Mademoiselle, your very humble and very obedient servant,

"DE ROBESPIERRE.

"ARRAS,

"June 22, 1782.

"P.S.—I have the honour to enclose three copies of the report, and leave you to dispose as you think fit of those you do not intend to keep."

In the following unpublished letter, addressed to an unknown lady, the gallant semi-ironical ^{just}ing of the youth of twenty-four is changed to something more serious, one might almost say disdainful; but the style possesses the same eloquence, though perhaps a little more restrained:

"MADAME,

"I dare to think that an essay devoted to the defence of the oppressed is a tribute not unworthy of you, and I have decided to offer you the enclosed.

"The interest you have been kind enough to show in the matter with which it deals may be my excuse for this step, if, indeed, any apology is needed. In the midst of the annoyances attached to this painful work, you

appeared before me, Madame, your presence revived my courage, and those moments live in my memory. The work is now concluded, and, seeking some compensation for my labours, I find it in offering it to you.

“When one has upheld the cause of the unfortunate with those deep and painful feelings which the idea of injustice inspires, an injustice which one is compelled to combat, at a moment when victory is still uncertain, it is then that some consolation, some reward, is needed. The most sweet, the most glorious, of rewards is to be allowed to communicate one’s feelings to an amiable and illustrious lady, whose noble soul is created to sympathize with them. It is true that the prize is so magnificent that I might perhaps be accused of presumption in daring to aspire to it; but no, you owe it, Madame, to the efforts I have made to second your generous sentiments. And to what better use could you lend the splendour of your rank, and your amiable qualities, than to encourage by such easy means a zeal devoted to the relief of the unfortunate and the innocent ?

“I am, with respect, Madame, your very humble and very obedient servant,

“DE ROBESPIERRE.

“ARRAS,

“*December 21, 1786.*”

Finally, the following is another letter only lately come to light, addressed to the young lady to whom the "letter of the canaries" was written, but on this occasion a little dog is the subject. Robespierre was now thirty years of age, and if his jesting of 1788 is not quite the same as that of 1782, there is yet some recollection, some graceful reflection, of the earlier style :

" MADEMOISELLE,

" It is rare that one is able to present a pretty woman with a work such as the one I now enclose. It is for this reason, it seems to me, that the writers of reports must be relegated the last rank in literature, if, indeed, they are worthy of any place at all in the republic of letters. Unfortunates ! deprived of the sweetest reward that could crown their painful labours. Thanks be to heaven, and to you, that I am exempted from this common misfortune ; I send you reports, and you read them ; I owe this advantage, Mademoiselle, to your sound intelligence, and also to the indulgence you graciously accord to all my works. Upon this ground I am infinitely higher than the majority of laborious writers who follow the same profession as myself, and I have nothing to envy the most pleasing of poets or the most charm-

ing of novelists. For the highest point of happiness and glory for any writer, whosoever he may be, is to please the Graces, no matter how. Therefore, Mademoiselle, as soon as my reports begin to weary you, I beg of you instantly to warn me, that when you cease to read I may cease to write.

"Is the little dog that you are rearing for my sister as pretty as the one you showed me when I was at Béthune? Whatever it may be, we shall welcome it with honour and pleasure. I may say that, however ugly, it will still be pretty.

"A clever man is never ugly, said some celebrated woman—Mme. de Sévigné, I think; one might say some polite truth in the same style of your dog.

"And so my sister begs me to give you the most affectionate messages one can imagine, and, where there is question of doing you justice, I do not give way to her.

"I am, with respect, Mademoiselle, your very humble and very obedient servant,

"DE ROBESPIERRE.

"ARRAS,
"June 6, 1788."

Between the lines of these three letters it is easy to read the lively interest with which

the young lawyer inspired women. We find them taking interest in his work—and what work! All the chicanery of the *ancien régime*, tedious and obscure lawsuits, and yet they read his reports! What interest could these disinterested readers find in such things, unless it were the pleasing memory of the young man who presented them? What can one call this feeling which passes beyond friendship, and is not love? It is more than the one and less than the other. Was he a laggard, or did they draw back? A delicate situation which it would be foolhardy to try to explain.

IV

THE ROSES ON THE BANKS OF THE SCARPE

“I HAVE nothing to envy the most pleasing of poets,” wrote Maximilien to Mlle. Dehay. At the date these words were written he had been for three years a member of the Rosati.

The Rosati was a poetical society founded at Arras, which toasted in foaming wine and short verses the fame of Chapelle, La Fontaine, and Chaulieu. The Rose was the queen of these friendly meetings, held on the banks of the Scarpe, under a canopy of roses, at a place called Blagny, in the environs of Avesnes. The ceremony of initiation was simple and charming. “You will gather a rose,” writes someone to the Abbé Ménage, a future member, “drink in its perfume thrice, and place it in your buttonhole ; you will drink at a draught a glass of ruddy wine to the health of all the Rosati, past, present, and future ; then, in the name of the society,

you will embrace the person whom you love most, and then you will be a true Rosati." The foundation of this charming society dates as far back as June 12, 1778. Robespierre was introduced to it on November 15, 1785, by Saint-Harduin, life secretary of the Academy of Arras. It then comprised the flower of the society of Arras—barristers, attorneys, soldiers, abbés, all united to "enjoy some honest recreation, to be enlightened by the rays of true philosophy, to laugh at ambition and a thousand important nothings, to revive the simple, frank style of our old authors in defiance of the preciousness and morbidness of various famous men of the time."

Here were to be found the painter Bergaigne, the lawyer Charamond, the Abbé Roman, the Comte de la Roque-Rochemont, the Abbé Berthe; Daubigny, professor of theology, "who was as much at his ease at table as in the pulpit"; Champmorin, Major in the Engineers; Captain Dumeny; Baillet de Vaugrenant; Legay, the poet; Carnot, Captain of the Royal Engineers; Foaciès de Ruzé, Attorney-General of the Conseil de l'Artois; Pierre Cot, the musician; and Dubois de Fosseux—the fame of the four last being sung by Robespierre in a verse of his hymn, "A la Coupe":

“ Amis, de ce discours usé,
 Concluons qui il faut boire,
 Avec le bon ami Ruzé
 Qui n’aimerait à boire !
 A l’ami Carnot,
 A l’amiable Cot,
 A l’instant je veux boire !
 A vous cher Fosseux,
 De ce vin mousseux,
 Je veux encore boire !”

Robespierre was received by the Chancellor le Gay, his colleague at the Bar, and welcomed in a speech which has come down to us :

“ Sir, he whose vigorous pen has fought successfully against the prejudice which, in this most enlightened age, associates the innocent with the punishment of the guilty, which brands the former with the indelible stamp of infamy, and condemns him to a kind of civil death by sentencing him to lead a useless life ; he who has raised his voice no less eloquently against the error in our legislation by which an unfortunate child, who has been left in ignorance of his parentage by a father and mother equally ashamed of his birth, is deprived of part of the common rights of citizens ; he who from the outset of his career has drawn the eyes of his compatriots upon him—such a one would seem more fitted to take his place in learned academies than to sit by our side on this grassy bank,



HÉBERT

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where, the cup of Bacchus in hand, we become intoxicated by the voluptuous perfume of the rose, born of the blood of Adonis.

“Great talents, sir, are dear to us—above all when, like yours, they are directed to a useful end. We follow with the deepest interest every step in their development. But when such talents are a man’s only recommendation, when they are unaccompanied by the qualities which make him shine in congenial society, then a thorny hedge is erected between him and the Rosati.

“Fortunately for us, sir, Nature has given to men of genius, in compensation for the labours to which she has condemned them, and the annoyances entailed by such labours, the gift of evoking mirth, of turning a charming verse, a taste for laughter—in fact, what a Rosati of the Augustinian age calls *desipere in loco*. Thanks to this double gift conferred on the same person, we see you here among us, side by side with charming versifiers, a profound geometer, a skilful mathematician, who brings the charm of oratory to his teaching ; you see here the eloquent interpreter of the spirit of the law, and soon we shall see you yourself a member. A hand which needs but a brush to create sisters to the rose it holds will presently offer you this

emblem of our society ; our Chapelle fills already with ruddy wine, which he can sing better than drink, the goblet to be allotted you in our banquets, and a fraternal kiss awaits you from lips which more than once have made Truth victorious.”

After this speech, which eloquently shows the high esteem in which the young barrister was held by his compeers, a certificate was given him, written on pink paper, perfumed with rose scent, and sealed with a seal in the shape of a rose. These gallant lines were appended :

Translation of the Poems quoted in the Text.

“ Whereas a certain man of parts,
 Robespierre by name, lives in our days,
 A lawyer fine in many ways—
 Whereas of many subtle arts
 He giveth proof in diverse ways,
 Uttering words of wit and fire,
 With often quite a note of satire,
 Yet not to wound or rouse our ire.
 Whereas, as I am bound to tell,
 He sings and laughs and drinks right well,
 And sometimes in a lucid hour
 He plucks and wears the Muse’s flower,
 And, climbing up Parnassus’ heights,
 With ease attains poetic flights ;
Rosatis we, the chosen band,
 The gayest spirits in the land,
 Since time began, as I suppose,
 Have always known to laugh at foes,
 We’ve found the secret to recall

By means of joyous festival,
 The happy ages long gone by
 Of frolicsome gay Poesy.
 To all men whom it may concern,
 Frenchmen, English, all in turn,
 In East and Western Hemisphere,
 Take notice, we hereby declare,
 Assembled, by a special grace,
 Each man to empty in his place
 His goblet, cup, or mug, or glass;
 We all unanimously pass
 Th' aforesaid to our company;
 Upon an hour, upon a day
 Within a month, he shall appear,
 Leaving his house, to join us here—
 Among us he shall take his place,
 Indulgent audience to face—
 And charming couplets he will sing,
 And loud shall our applause ring!"

Nothing remained but for the new member to pay the usual poetical tribute, which he did with good grace, and then sang the following three verses to the tune of "*Résiste moi, belle Aspasia*," then very much the fashion :

"THE ROSE.

"With thanks to the members of the Society of the Rosati.

"I see the thorn beside the rose
 Among the bouquets that you bring;
 Your verses far outshine my prose,
 Whenever you my praises sing.
 And, sirs, the flattering things you say
 Confuse me, for I know full well
 The rose brings compliments my way,
 The thorn an answer doth compel.

" And at this feast of harmony,
 Where all is in accordance meet,
 One cannot find a flower more gay,
 A couplet with a rhyme more neat.
 And I alone accuse the Fates
 Of limiting my venturous flights.
 The rose is queen within your gates,
 And your verse rules on Parnass' heights.

" And if to memory I recall
 Your acts of kindness, not a few,
 Your triumphs far outstrip them all,
 And make my thanks appear less due.
 To gardeners as skilled as you
 Scant gratitude the beggar owes ;
 When laurels grow around your brow
 You well can spare one little rose."

More than once Robespierre raised his voice under the canopy of Blagny, notably at the reception of M. Foaciès de Ruzé, when he sang two verses at a meeting where there was no false note in the cordiality which reigned, " but the false voice of the singer, M. de Robespierre " —so states the report of the meeting, dated June 22, 1787. It is fairly certain that he did sing false, and we have already given the reason why Fleury's assertion " that he trilled " may be looked upon with suspicion. It is true that, according to the actor's statement, it was in jealousy of " Garat's success." This is in corroboration of the first statement. The verses sung in June, 1787, are worth quoting,

for they show us Robespierre in a frivolous and jesting mood, contrasting so strangely with the man in the calm atmosphere of his provincial life, and the charm and influence he exercised upon the women with whom he came in contact.

“ They have given you a rose,
And the petals when they fall
Beauty’s charms, the heart disclose
Open to the eyes of all.
And you took the foaming wine
In a goblet brimming over.
Can you see a man decline
The gift the gods alone discover ?

“ Can I offer you in trust
And in confidence my present ?
’Tis the seal that give I must,
Just a kiss like any peasant !
I am called by destiny,
Called to fill a certain need,
And my star is fortunate,
For my heart is in the deed.”

Here we have the poet and the man. On these occasions he is in sympathy with the verses he sings under the gently-swaying rose-trees on the banks of the Scarpe. We can draw a fairly good picture of him with the help of Boilly’s portrait painted at Arras in 1783. This charming and delicate work shows us the barrister with a slight smile on his face; his powdered hair falls in curls round the high

forehead ; he is wearing a white cravat, high collar, and striped blue suit. The model appealed to Boilly, whose brush has here lovingly caressed the canvas, painting in soft shadows round the smiling face of the future member of the Convention. This is the Robespierre of the Rosati, the Robespierre whom we shall now see among the young maidens of Arras, dedicating his verses to them and weaving madrigals.

We have seen some of his verses ; to conform to the rules of the Rosati, they tell of love and wine, with delicacy, never coarsely. No doubt the poetry is not very original ; it is in the style of the period, gallant and playful, but whatever one may say it is not an imitation of Dorat. It is neither licentious, suggestive, nor outrageous. It has certainly all " the prettiness of the gallant poets," but it disdains their obscenity. It has been said that the style is " laboured and bucolic," but it is the style of all the poets of the century, and Saint-Just, whose proclamations are a model of electrical eloquence, employs a similar style in " Organt." We do not, of course, wish to paint Maximilien de Robespierre as the most charming and elegant poet of his time. He is better than that, and we can afford to scorn this obscure fraction of his

glory. "He could not rival the poets," says Courtois ; but did he ever try ?

His poetical works are not numerous. Apart from the "Mouchoir du Prédicateur," unpublished and hidden in some collection of manuscript, all his poems are known. Some of those published are of doubtful authenticity ; others are frankly apocryphal. Charlotte gives in her memoirs a fragment of one of Robespierre's poems, which, judging from the five lines she gives from memory, was written in a serious and uplifting style :

" Le seul tourment du juste à son heure dernière
Et le seul dont alors je serai déchiré,
C'est de voir en mourant la pâle et sombre envie
Distiller sur mon front l'opprobre et l'infamie,
De mourir pour le peuple, et d'en être abhorré."

The prophetic character of these lines might make one suspect their authenticity, but we have no right to doubt Charlotte Robespierre's word. These five lines add nothing to the great Jacobin's glory, but his playful and familiar style reappears in the following letter, which gives us another sample of a frivolous type. It is, indeed, the playful Robespierre of 1783 who appears in this letter throwing a new light upon the portrait of the man at this time, a strange contrast to the Robespierre of that dark, blood-

reddened period of the Terror. The document is important as a study of his beautiful and sentimental youth, illumined by the fugitive light of love:

“SIR,

“There are no pleasures but such as are shared with one’s friends. I am therefore going to describe to you those I have been enjoying of late.

“Do not expect me to give you an account of my travels; this kind of work has been so prodigiously multiplied that the public should be satiated. I know an author who went on a voyage of five miles, and celebrated it in verse and in prose. What is such an enterprise compared to that which I have undertaken! I have not only done five miles, but six, and six good ones—so good that, in the opinion of the natives of this country, they are equal to seven ordinary miles. Nevertheless I shall not tell you one word about my voyage. I am sorry for you; you will be the loser. I could tell you of adventures of thrilling interest; those of Ulysses and Telemachus are nothing in comparison.

“It was five in the morning when we left; our chariot issued from the gates of the town

(Arras) precisely at the same moment that the sun's chariot sprang from the ocean's bosom. It was decorated with a cloth of dazzling whiteness, a piece of which floated in the air, the sport of zephyrs ; it was thus we passed before the dawn-risen gatekeepers. You may be sure that I did not fail to turn my eyes upon them ; I wished to see whether these Arguses of the farm would belie their ancient reputation for civility ; I dared to hope that I might exceed them in politeness, if that were possible. I leant out of the carriage ; I removed the new hat which covered my head ; I saluted them with a gracious smile ; I counted on a fitting return. Would you believe it, those gatekeepers, immobile like wayside gods at the door of their hut, gazed upon me with a fixed stare, and did not return my bow ! My self-love has always been excessive ; this look of contempt wounded me to the quick ; I was in an abominable temper for the rest of the day.

“ Meanwhile our steeds carried us with a speed beyond words. They seemed determined to dispute the palm of swiftness with the horses of the sun which flew over our heads, as I had challenged in politeness the keepers of the gates of Méaulins. With a bound they traversed the suburb of Sainte-Catherine ; another,

and we were at Lens, where we made a short stay, of which I took advantage to admire the beauties the town offers to the traveller's curiosity. While the rest of the company breakfasted, I escaped and climbed the hill on which the calvary is erected, from whence, with feelings of emotion and admiration, my eyes roamed over that vast plain, where at the age of twenty Condé won that celebrated victory over the Spaniards which saved our country. But my interest was awakened by a still more interesting sight—the Hôtel de Ville. It is remarkable neither for size nor for magnificence; nevertheless it has the right to inspire me with the liveliest interest. This modest building, I said in gazing on it, is the sanctuary where the Mayor T——, in his wig, holding the scales of Themis in his hand, was formerly wont to weigh impartially the claims of his fellow-citizens. Administrator of justice, and favoured disciple of Æsculapius, after promulgating a sentence he would prescribe some medical remedy. The criminal and the patient cowered before him, and this great man in virtue of his double title enjoyed the most extensive power any man ever exercised over his compatriots.

“ In my enthusiasm I knew no repose until I had penetrated to the interior of the Hôtel de

Ville. I wished to see the court-room ; I wished to see the benches where the Aldermen sit. At my desire a search was made for the porter throughout the town ; he came, he opened the door, and I precipitated myself into the court-room. Overcome by religious reverence, I fell on my knees in that august temple ; in an ecstasy I kissed the seat formerly pressed by the great T——'s posterior. It was thus that Alexander prostrated himself before the tomb of Achilles, thus Cæsar paid homage to the monument containing the ashes of the conqueror of Asia.

“ We returned to the carriage. I was scarcely seated on my bundle of straw, when Carvin appeared in view. At sight of that happy land we all gave vent to a cry such as went up from the Trojan refugees at sight of the shores of Italy after the fall of Ilium. The inhabitants of the village gave us a welcome which compensated us for the indifference of the gatekeepers of Méaulins. Citizens of all classes showed a pleasing anxiety to see us ; the cobbler, awl in hand, stopped in piercing a sole, to gaze on us leisurely ; the barber, holding a razor, left a half-shaved man, to run to meet us ; a cook risked burning her pies, to satisfy her curiosity. I saw three gossips interrupt their conversation to

fly to the window ; in fact, during our short passage through the town—too short, alas !—our self-love was flattered by seeing a number of people interested in us. How sweet it is to travel, I thought ! how true it is that no man is a prophet in his own country ! At the gates of our own town we are scorned ; six miles distant we become a bait for public curiosity.

“ I was engaged in these wise reflections, when we reached the house which was our destination. I will not essay to depict our transports of joy as we fell upon each other’s necks ; the sight would have moved you to tears. In the whole of history I know but one scene that could compare with it—that is, when Æneas, after the fall of Troy, reached Epirus with his fleet. He found there Helenus and Andromache, whom fate had placed on the throne of Pyrrhus. They say the meeting was most tender. I do not doubt it. Æneas, who was exceedingly good-hearted ; Helenus, the best Trojan in the world ; and Andromache, the affectionate wife of Hector, shed many tears, gave vent to many sighs, on this occasion. I am willing to believe that their emotion was not less than ours ; but after Helenus, Æneas, Andromache, and ourselves, let others throw up the sponge.

“ Since our arrival every moment has been given to pleasure. Since last Saturday I have been eating tarts to my heart’s content. Fate has ordained that my bed should be placed in a room which is the storeroom for pastries. Thus I was exposed to the temptation of eating all night, but I considered that it is great to master one’s passions, and I slept surrounded by these seductive objects. It is true that I made up for this long abstinence during the day.

“ ‘ I give thee thanks who first with skilful hand
 Did fashion paste and pastry to command,
 And gave to mortals this delicious dish,
 So nothing more was left for them to wish.
 Have they raised altars to thy glorious name,
 All consecrated to thy talents’ fame ?
 Hundreds of lands are prodigal of vows
 The universe, its groves and temples, shows ;
 But of *thy* genius they have little ken,
 Who brought Ambrosia on the earth to men.
 Pies reign in honour at their festal board,
 But thou’rt forgot as if by one accord.’

“ Of all the ingratitude of which mankind has been guilty towards their benefactors, this mark of ingratitude is to me the most revolting. It has fallen to the natives of Artois to expiate it ; in the opinion of all Europe, they better than any people of the world have learnt the value of a tart. Their glory demands that they should build a temple to the inventor of tarts.

I will tell you confidentially that I have a plan for this purpose, which I intend to propose to the States of Artois. I expect to be powerfully supported by the whole body of the clergy.

“But the pleasure of eating a tart is nothing unless eaten in good company; I enjoyed this advantage. Yesterday I received the greatest honour I have ever dared aspire to. I dined with three Lieutenants and the son of a Bailiff; all the magistrates of the surrounding villages were assembled round our table. In the midst of this senate, the Lieutenant of Carvin shone like Calypso among her nymphs. Ah, could you but have seen the kindness with which he conversed with the rest of the company like an ordinary mortal, and the indulgence he displayed in judging the champagne poured out for him, his satisfied expression as he seemed to smile at his reflection in his glass! I saw this—I myself! Nevertheless, see how difficult it is to please the human heart. My desires are not yet satisfied, and I am preparing to return to Arras; in seeing you I hope to experience a more real pleasure than those I have spoken of. We shall meet again with the same happiness as that of Ulysses and Telemachus after twenty years’ absence. I shall have no difficulty in forgetting my Bailiffs and my Lieutenants.

However seductive, let me assure you, sir, a Lieutenant can never be your equal. His face, even when sweetly reddened by champagne, has nothing of the charm with which Nature alone has dowered yours, and the society of all the Bailiffs of the universe could not compensate me for the loss of yours.

“ With the most sincere friendship, I am, sir,
your very humble and very obedient servant,

“ DE ROBESPIERRE.

“ CARVIN,
“ *June* 12, 1783.”

Let twelve years roll by, and this pleasant jesting is changed ; twelve years later we come to the day when the Incorruptible, by means of Couthon, brought his law of 22 Prairial before the Convention.

Between these two dates lies the whole destiny of Robespierre.

V

HIS APPEARANCE

WE have studied Robespierre as a young elegant poet, whose portrait Boilly seems to have faithfully depicted. At Paris his face is covered by an impenetrable civic mask; the great catastrophes of the Revolution in which he played a part seem to have cast their shadow over him. How did his contemporaries see him? From among the portraits left to us, is it possible to form some definite idea? We think not; all we can obtain is some approximate resemblance; as to a true portrait, it seems that we must abandon all hope of obtaining one. For two witnesses who agree, there are a hundred who disagree.

Some, like Thibaudeau, describe him as of middle height; others, like Nodier, as small. Montjoye says that he was clumsily built; Suard gives his height at 5 feet 2 or 3 inches. The second asserts that he was of slight build, the third that his figure was out of proportion

and ungraceful ; the fourth asserts that his body was stiff as a ramrod.

But what is all this by the side of the portrait of Robespierre drawn by an anonymous stranger, in a German pamphlet published in 1794 ? To Thibaudeau, Montjoye, and Nodier, if not infirm, he was yet feeble or undersized ; to the German he is a Hercules, nothing less.

“ Robespierre,” he writes, “ is now a man of about forty. Though slight and tall, he does not appear frail ; on the contrary, one feels that he has a powerful frame. He has strong muscles, and not too much flesh. His legs and arms are full and straight ; his height is 6 feet, and he carries himself well. In spite of vigils and mental worry, he has not lost flesh. His chest is broad, his breathing full and strong ; and as to his stomach, it is neither too flat nor too prominent. By build Robespierre belongs to the category of handsome men, and his face completes his claim to be ranked among them.”

The anonymous writer dedicates this portrait to Robespierre himself in the following terms : “ To whom else can I dedicate this portrait of thy life ? It tells the truth, and I am convinced that thou wouldst neither condemn nor ban it, since truth is so dear to thee ! ” How much of this is mockery ?

During the period of the Convention nervous movements betrayed the fatigue he was feeling—"a kind of nervous contraction," says Suard, which from clenched hands passed to shoulders and neck, which he moved convulsively from "right to left." Montjoye says the same: "A convulsive movement of shoulders, eyes, and hands." However, perhaps Montjoye merely copies Suard. Nevertheless, they were not the only ones who noticed the blinking of the eyes, denoting nervous impatience. Nodier speaks of "his yellow pupil, which darted glances from between convulsively twitching eyelids." Dumont (of Geneva), who had been close to him, finds that Robespierre "never looked one in the face, and that his eyes blinked in a painful and continuous fashion." Barère also speaks "of his blinking eyes, furnished with glasses." His sight had indeed grown feeble, which we may attribute to his excessive night work. Courtois says that "his eyes were small and dull," which to the Thermidorian is a physical proof of the moral ugliness of the vanquished man, whom he tramples fiercely under foot.

"His eyes were weak and short-sighted," says some writer; and Fantin-Desodoards adds that Robespierre had a "sinister glance." Is it upon this evidence that M. Sardou speaks of

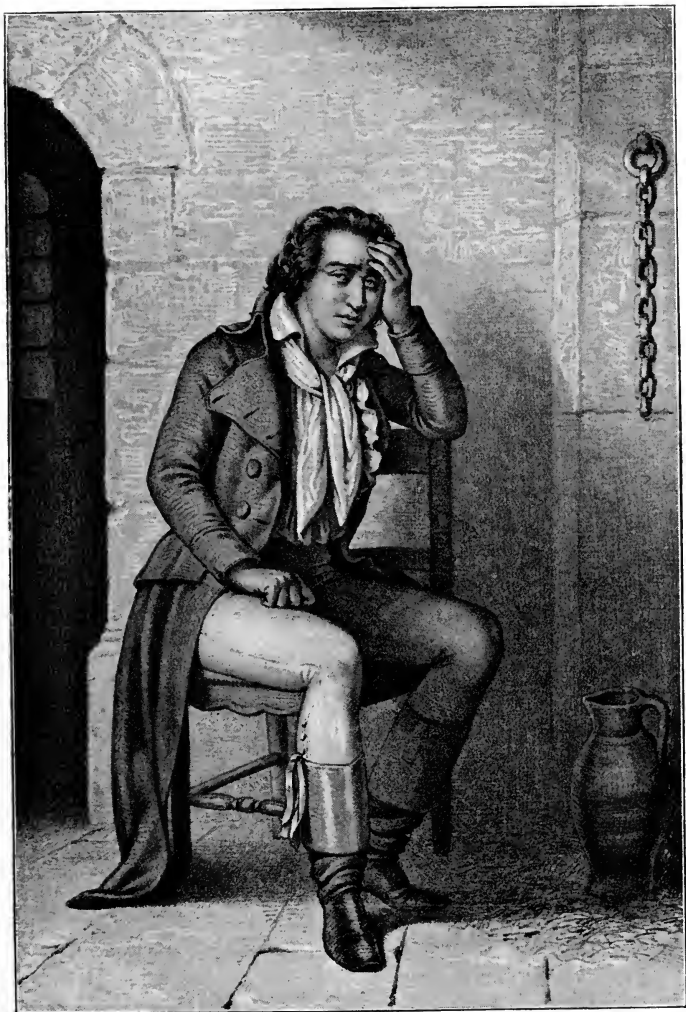
“his green eyes, red-rimmed”; and that another writer says, “his green, Medusa-like eyes”? This is a surfeit of green—and why? Because Mme. de Staël has declared that the Incorruptible had ignoble features and green-coloured veins.

How, then, can we attach importance to evidence which is suspect on all sides? On the morrow of Thermidor even contemporary writers seem to copy one another. We have quoted Montjoye; let us quote Nodier. He speaks of the “wide, colourless, and tight-closed mouth,” and in doing so is quoting Duperron, who also writes of Robespierre’s “colourless, tight-closed mouth.” Let Merlin de Thionville speak in his pamphlet of the fallen enemy as having a “bilious complexion,” and Thibaudeau slavishly repeats him: “He had a bilious complexion.” The anonymous German writer previously quoted alone brings a new tune to the general chorus:

“Under his arched eyebrows, rising on a forehead whose beauty is unmarred by wrinkles, shine his dark blue eyes, full of fire, and yet serious and thoughtful, where the flame of fanaticism is blended with an indescribable expression of gentleness. A nose of pleasing shape, neither too round nor too curved, stands

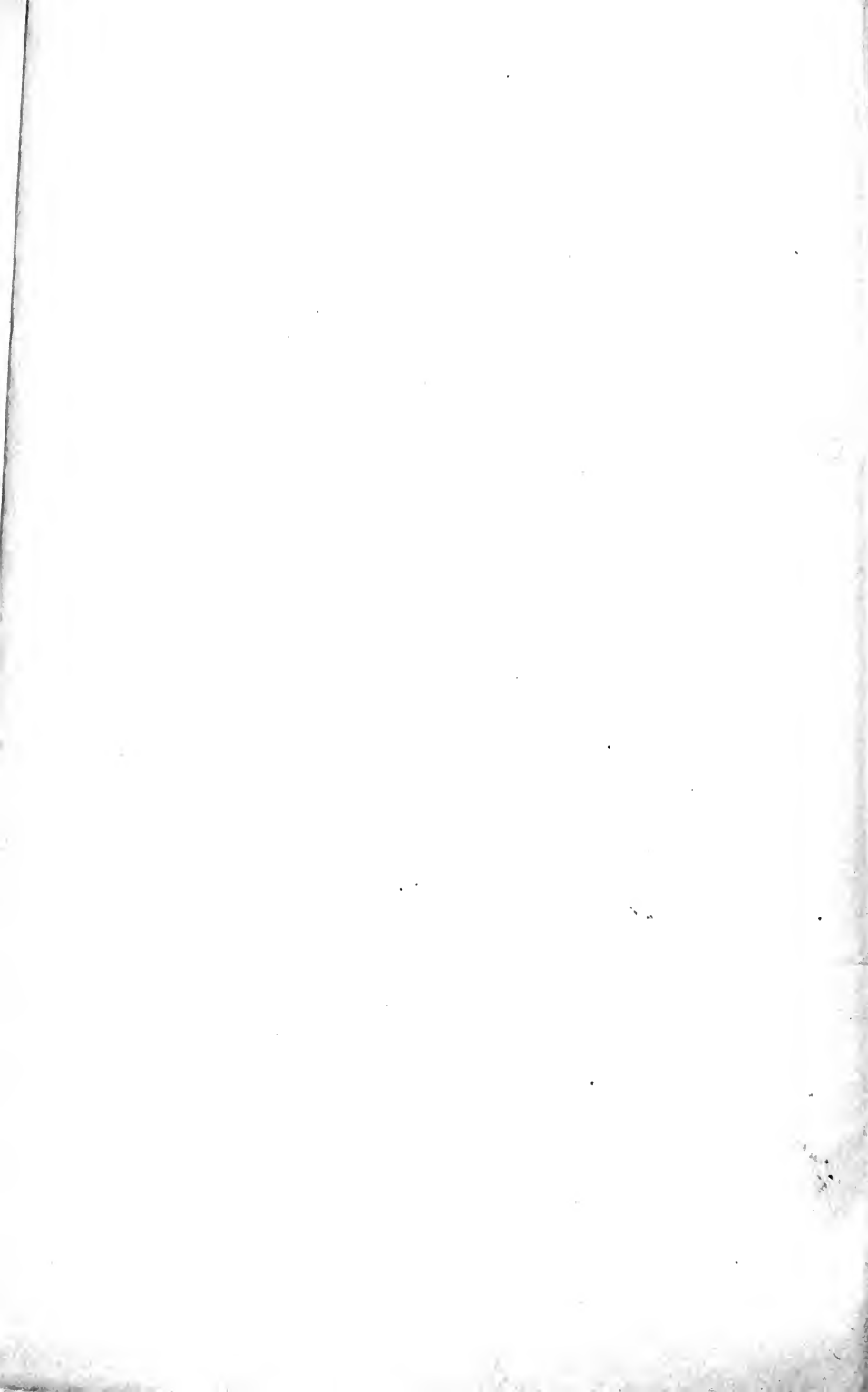
out between the eyebrows. His cheeks are not too full, and have the ruddy look of manhood ; and his mouth never loses its gracious expression unless giving vent to a truly republican indignation. Black hair, which he usually allows to hang loose in waving locks, forms a frame for the handsome face, whose attractive colouring is enhanced by a blue-black beard."

We have to choose between this ironical portrait and the tiger-cat depicted by Merlin de Thionville. Of the two, which is the more reliable ?



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VI

THE MORAL PORTRAIT OF ROBESPIERRE

ROBESPIERRE'S moral portrait, fortunately for him, has been left us as a legacy by himself. From his papers we can analyze his character and judge of his soul. Morally and physically he has been travestied and calumniated. Under this analysis the mask falls from him, and a very different man from the Robespierre of the Thermidorian legend appears to our view. His verses, letters, and life, teach us what kind of a man he was in his youth. His speeches in the public courts show us the politician. As a young man "he was given to melancholy." No doubt, but how could he be otherwise in damp, grey-skied Artois, with its nostalgic and monotonous landscapes. In maturity, according to the excellent opinion of Louis Blanc, he is "Robespierre the sombre, the austere, the sober, the discreet." These indeed are qualities which become virtues during the revolutionary explosion of 1789 and 1793, which

intoxicated the people and brought a blood-thirsty, warlike fever upon France. Austerlitz was indeed a virtue at a time when the Égalité Palace was one vast public brothel, when Mirabeau died of sexual excesses, when Danton's great orgies brought ladies of easy virtue, with flying skirts and bare necks, to the taverns on the banks of the Seine. Sobriety was indeed a virtue when critics of the spirit of the age were protesting against dinners which cost 100 francs per head. Discretion was indeed a virtue at a time when all ears were eager for secrets, treacherously betrayed on the morrow—a unique virtue claimed by many and possessed by few.

But why prolong Robespierre's defence here? In this suit for ever pending, every act, every gesture, is an unimpeachable argument, pleading in his favour. He asks of posterity the bare justice which every accused has a right to expect.

VII

THE ANTI-SANS-CULOTTE

STRANGELY enough, the physical monster painted by the Thermidorians, the victim they never tire of lacerating, is presented to us elegantly attired, and the only sincere evidence they give of him is that he was always well dressed.

They grant this, but they make a grievance of the fact that he thought it was not necessary to show one's love of the people by appearing in sabots, a torn shirt, and a woollen cap. "Leader of the Sans-Culottes, he was careful of his dress, and still used powder when no one else did." The reason we can guess. Robespierre's goal was tyranny, and even royalty. This is how the Thermidorians explain Maximilien's care of his personal appearance. "M. Robespierre, the aristocrat!" says Parisot in 1792. In Robespierre's eyes this was no insult; in Parisot's it was. The Republic of the People—this was Robespierre's dream and ideal, not the Republic of the Sans-Culottes. During

the sitting of March 19, 1792, he made this clear to the Jacobins. Pétion wrote to the society, as Mayor of Paris, begging them to refrain from any external mark—*read* red cap—which might signal them out as a party or faction. Robespierre supported Pétion, and at his word the society banned the red cap, which he would never consent to wear. Can this be called dogmatic self-sufficiency? In our eyes it is simple decency at a time when decency was not in fashion.

He was naturally clean, averse to untidiness, and as such an enemy of the Sans-Culotte head-gear. "He used powder when all had ceased to use it," says Thibaudeau. At Arras we saw that the hairdresser came every morning to dress his hair. Leaving the States-General for Paris, he carried among his scanty luggage "a bag of powder and a puff." He never ceased to use it. "His clothes were always clean and his hair well dressed," says the *Nouvelles Politiques*. His ordinary dress was "a green coat, coloured waistcoat, dark breeches, and top-boots." This formerly correct dress contrasted strangely with the usual Jacobin slovenliness. Did not Vivant-Denon meet him in the Tuileries wearing a satin waistcoat embroidered with pink? Philarète Chasles also speaks of

that pink waistcoat. Besides, one of them is to be seen in M. Henri Lavedan's collection. The tone is charming, and the embroidery, in the style of the period, is very artistic. His linen was fine and clean—"linen fit for a Marquis," says Fleury, who relates on the subject an anecdote which appeared in a story showing a saleswoman bringing some rare lace to Robespierre, who holds it to his nose ecstatically, inhaling the perfume as though it were a bouquet. The tale is on a par with that given in the "Memoirs" (apocryphal of course) "of a Lady of Quality." Robespierre is there presented to us attired in elegant clothes and fine linen, and wearing an array of rings. It was his enemy, Marc-Antoine Baudot, who took the trouble, whilst in exile, to point out the improbability of the story. "As to the linen and clothes, it is true," he says, "but as to the rings, untrue;" and he at least had known the victim of 9 Thermidor.

Besides, was he alone in liking to have his stockings well drawn up, alone in protesting, by the decency of his dress and elegance of his manners, against the slovenliness of the Sans-Culottes? Did not Georges Duval, whose evidence is here reliable, because it can be verified, see Saint-Just, in his own home, attired "in a dressing-gown of dazzling whiteness, his feet

encased in elegant Turkish slippers made of yellow morocco leather" ?

Did not Billaud-Varenne himself, the man with the red wig, when an exile in Guiana, write to his wife thanking her for a parcel of fine linen ?

"I send," he says, in a letter dated from Dorvilliers, on 21 Vendémiaire, year IX., "my thanks to your worthy friend for the things he had the kindness to send me. I am the more grateful to him because, in the midst of my misfortune, he has supplied me with the means of gratifying a fancy which I neglected to satisfy during the days of my prosperity : that is, the longing—you are familiar with it—to have fine linen. A taste which comes from my liking for cleanliness and decency. Also, though I am not given to display, or even inclined to it, I cannot help smiling when I deck myself in a cambric shirt."

If Robespierre is not an exception, he is at least a model—a model of one who could preserve his dignity even during the most fearful hours of the Terror ; of one who, with a fractured jaw, could yet in his agony say, "Thank you, sir," to the ragged Sans-Culotte who offered him a glass of water when, during the tragic watch of 10 Thermidor, he was gasping in the antechamber of the Comité de Salut Public.

VIII

LOVE

ELEGANT and careful of his dress and person, he must have been pleasing to women. Among those whom he knew, which did he love? It would perhaps be well here to dispose of a tale which was very nearly accepted—that is, that a dressmaker, Suzanne Forber, was Robespierre's mistress. The apocryphal memoirs published in 1830 by Charles Reybaud presented her to us in a novel and unexpected fashion. The extract is not without flavour, especially as Reybaud attributes the paternity of it to Maximilien. The style would be sufficient to expose the deception if the latter were not already well established.

“A German doctor had come among us,” we read, “the possessor of a marvellous secret, which filled the curious with amazement. It was Mesmer, inventor of animal magnetism, a divinity in the eyes of some, a money-making rascal in the eyes of others, who with his magic

wand made cripples walk, gave hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind. The somnolent condition into which he threw the sick who came to him brought about a complete restoration to health, by revealing and destroying the germ of their diseases, and radically cured them. Thus was the fame of Mesmer's cures published broadcast throughout France.

“Without putting an absolute faith in all these marvels, I could not prevent myself from having a certain belief in them, which neither time nor experience has destroyed. Both my sympathies and leanings caused me to lend a favourable hearing.

“There was no need to be a doctor to be interested in the great discovery of the day ; everyone meddled with it, and our little society was only following the fashion by devoting meetings to it. Our friend, lawyer B——, lately returned from Paris, initiated us in the mysteries of the passes. Carnot, Ruzé, Fosseux, and all the members of the society, made various experiments, without success. I wanted to try my hand also, but, wishing to judge of my experiment alone, I called no witness. At that time I used to see fairly frequently a young girl named Suzanne F——; a boy and girl friendship existed between us—at least, that is what I thought—and as far as I was personally

concerned I was not mistaken. The innocent intimacy between us was sanctioned by her mother, who sometimes left us alone together. She was lively and witty. We had often spoken of magnetism ; the idea of a cure which would prove a universal panacea fired her young and daring imagination. I took advantage of her enthusiasm to propose that I should experiment on her. My request seemed to surprise her ; she stared at me, blushed ; then, looking about her, made me a sign that she would be willing. I immediately set to work. I assumed the air of a doctor ; I waved my hands before her face and arms without touching her ; I rested my eyes on her beautiful blue eyes. Then she began to be troubled, she dropped her arms like a person who is sleepy, her head fell forward, and she lost consciousness. A most amazing scene passed between us ; my friends have never heard a word upon it. . . . No, I cannot relate it ; it is Robespierre's secret ; it must die with him. All I can say is that, someone having opened the door, she gave a cry, woke up, and went into violent convulsions. I questioned her as soon as she was better ; she did not remember a word that she had said whilst she was asleep. The only impression which remained was the indefinable uneasiness she had felt on coming to herself. The rest was more

fugitive than a dream ; she had not the slightest recollection of it. The remembrance of that evening left me no peace for some days. I would go to Suzanne with the same question, 'Do you really mean that you remember nothing ?' 'No,' was her only reply, and she would look at me blushing. I wished to renew the experiment, but she obstinately refused. I understood that her modesty was awakened, and that she feared to become too attached to her magnetiser. I refrained from further solicitation, and never again attempted to exercise my power, and I buried all Suzanne's words in my heart. If at first I had succeeded in disbelieving, my whole life would have taught me to believe."

We must leave to Charles Reybaud the merit of inventing this obscure story. Robespierre a mesmerizer—the Incorruptible—had not appeared in this light before. To find a heroine Reybaud had not unnaturally appealed to Montjoye. He has also brought Suzanne Forber on to the scene, but less romantically. His first pamphlet, published in the year IV., describes her as a young person, by profession a dress-maker, who had won Robespierre's first love. "Further on he describes her as his mistress. According to him, it was to her that Maximilien wrote, making known his project of a triumphal

entry into Arras. Montjoye therefore makes the incident take place towards October, 1791, because from a letter addressed to Duplay by Robespierre, dated 'Arras, October 16, 1791,' we learn that he was to receive a civic crown. Montjoye cannot have been ignorant of this, yet he writes, a little farther on, that Robespierre died without daring to reappear at Arras." There is an identical account in Desessarts, who, following Montjoye's example, steals from whom he pleases, even from Montjoye.

"Some time before," he writes, "he [Robespierre] had announced his approaching return to one of his old mistresses, confiding to her the secret wish of his self-love. She, in concert with Robespierre's brother and sisters, consequently collected together all the vagabonds and partisans of anarchy to be found in the town of Arras, and arranged the pomp with which the Incorruptible representative of the people was to be welcomed in his native town." Honest Desessarts exaggerates; the co-operation of Maximilien's sisters is unfortunately brought in. In October, 1791, he had but one sister, Charlotte; the other, Eulalie-Françoise was dead, as we know; she died on May 5, 1780. As to Robespierre's letter to Suzanne Forber, it has been seen by no one, for a very good reason.

But Montjoye, whom we have already ex-

posed as a too faithful plagiarist with regard to Suard's article in the *Nouvelles Politiques*, here again conceals his theft but badly. These details, like all those of his libel, he has taken from contemporary pamphleteers of the same type as himself. The Suzanne Forber of whom he speaks is lifted bodily from the "Actes des Apôtres," which describes her, at the commencement of the Revolution, as the correspondent of the "candle of Arras." These gentlemen made her a dressmaker of Arras, living in the *marché au poisson*. Ernest Hamel is indignant at the farce. Robespierre treated it with contempt. He was justified. One of Maximilien's aunts, Marie-Eléonore-Eulalie, who, as we have seen, signed as godmother the baptismal certificate of Augustin Robespierre, married a widower, Robert Deshorties, notary of Arras. Besides a certain fortune, the notary brought his young second wife the charge of a little girl named Anaïs, of two other girls, and of a son. Anaïs, it appears, was specially loved by her stepmother, and as she grew up "was dowered with all the grace and seductive attractions of youth." Maximilien was a frequent visitor at Mme. Deshorties', and it was not long before the inevitable idyll with Anaïs came about.

According to Charlotte, he loved and was loved by her, but according to the police report

unearthed by M. Peuchet, Anaïs was a precious little jade. In speaking of the madrigals sent by Robespierre to the young girl, the informer adds: "But the sly little Franc-comtoise puss received them on all sides." What does this mean? Well, the end of the report tells us: "The pomp displayed by her parents in order to entice to their house the deputies of the States-General, had, I imagine, something to do with the hopes she now and again gave to this timid and jealous gallant [Robespierre]. He fell into the trap, and introduced into this family, who were playing with him, gallants more cunning than himself, who carried on an active campaign of glances, with whom there was an exchange of love-letters. The little lady was in the seventh heaven. He affected a reserve with this beautiful child, in order, perhaps, that the other guests might imitate him; but he must have begun to see his silly mistake. Several balls were given, but I never saw him dancing. The lovers managed to surround Robespierre by skilful colleagues, who won his heart by flattery. Between love and vanity, he resembled Buridan's donkey."

Dare we say it? This police report appears to us very suspect. It is difficult to see what interest the Royalist police could have in 1789 or 1790 in spying upon Robespierre and

the Deshorties' drawing-room. But since all means of checking it is impossible, one can but quote the passage with all necessary caution. There is one thing which seems to confirm it—that is, that Robespierre did not marry Mlle. Anaïs Deshorties. This does not mean that the question of marriage was not discussed. Charlotte says that it was spoken of various times, but that it did not take place, because Maximilien was torn “from the sweetness of private life” by his election to the States-General. Anaïs had, of course, sworn eternal love and fidelity to the young barrister, which no doubt is the reason why she hastened to marry, during the session of the Constituante, one of Robespierre's friends, the barrister Leduc. The young man, his sister tells us, was greatly pained at the news; but M. Hamel formally contradicts this evidence, and declares no promise of marriage was ever given. He declares that this information is taken from a source as authentic as that of Charlotte's, but until some conclusive evidence is published the question must remain in abeyance.

Was the famous little poem so often quoted, known as the “*Madrigal à Ophélie*,” addressed to Mlle. Deshorties?

“Young Ophelia fair, believe me;
 Whate'er the world may say, your glass may sing,
 Be satisfied to hear our praises ring;
 Always keep your modesty !

Fear the power of your charm;
Seek not to abuse it;
You will but be loved the more
If you fear to lose it."

The history of how this charming and elegant little poem came to be known deserves to be quoted. The lines appeared for the first time in 1787 in Paris, in two collections of poems known as "Le Chansonnier des Grâces" and "Quelques Vers," published by the bookseller Roger. They were unsigned. Suleau was the first to disclose the authorship, in the "Actes des Apôtres," No. 5, p. 10, where he gave the poem, which was preceded by the following ironical passage: "M. de Robespierre is famous throughout Artois as a classical writer. He has even been known to write purely literary works, collected by every person of taste. We will please our readers by making known to them a madrigal written by M. de Robespierre, which was the despair of Voltaire's old age."

The madrigal was followed by an ironical note:

"M. de Robespierre does not confine himself to light literature. He edits the paper known as *L'Union, ou Journal de la Liberté*. We invite our readers to read the sitting of Saturday night. The article is entirely in the style of Tacitus; and when he is reproached with writing the madrigal which we have given, one remembers involuntarily that the author of

"L'Esprit des Lois" also wrote "Le Temple de Gnide." Writers who can combine strength and grace, imagination and philosophy, profound thought and elegance of style, are very rare. We were tempted for a moment to compare M. de Robespierre to Montesquieu, but we remembered that the aristocratic birth of the latter obscured his glory with dark clouds."

Did Robespierre protest against the authorship of the madrigal being attributed to him? Not in any way, and yet, as has been justly pointed out, there were friendly newspapers at his disposal to take up his defence. The Comte de Montlosier quotes the madrigal in his memoirs, but until then its authenticity might have been questioned, and was not proved until 1856, when the document was sold at a sale of autograph manuscripts for the sum of 500 francs.

"My brother's amiability with women captivated their affection," says Charlotte; "several, I believe, felt more than ordinary friendship for him." Among these we may place the unknown lady of Arras, to whom Robespierre sent some game and some verses. Verses, always verses, how charmingly and easily he turns them! He overdoes the classical method. Perhaps he leaves his madrigals to express what he is too timid to say himself, and his natural shyness is

a marvellous excuse for the trick. The poem that follows has only recently been published ; we only know the end which has been given to the public by the great-granddaughter of the recipient. We find again here the restrained grace and familiar style of all Maximilien's rhymed letters :

“ As my dedication prithee place
The very sly and cunning man
Who made the stupid plan
Of laughing in my face.

“ I'm honoured in his fall to zero,
And very proud of my conquest.
The Critic is in great request,
And mocks the poet and the hero.

“ The gift was paltry and the letter dull;
You breathe it in so gay a tone.
The hunt has been for a poet-fool;
The poem is worthy the hunter alone.”

But the recipient of the above is not the only veiled figure in the cortège of forgotten shadows which belong to Robespierre's sentimental and amorous youth. To whom were the verses addressed which were found by M. Stéfane Pol among Robespierre's papers, written on a sheet of paper yellow with age, and half burnt. Is it a copy or the original ? Who can say ? “ But how came it to be among such serious papers ?” asks Stéfane Pol. Secret of a lost page ! Mystery of a soul that knew no confidant !

And this is what he confides to paper :

"When she was faithful I loved her well;
 Nothing pleased me as much as her charms;
 I spent my life at her beck and call,
 For her I dared e'en death's alarms.—
 Tell her now that the end begins,
 Her lies and deceit are all of them o'er.
 * * * * *
 And again repeat that I love her no more!"

Each verse ends with the refrain :

"Dites lui bien que je ne l'aime plus."

Women rarely resist verses, especially when those verses are amorous and sing their praise. An old and charming tradition, and certainly it did not prove disappointing to Robespierre. By his verses and his letters to women he delivers himself an easy prey to any scrutiny the curious may wish to make of his character as a lover. His courteous and gracious respect for women never failed him. He who abstained from any rudeness towards men, was always the gallant poet and charming lover of his youthful days towards women. Only, in 1793 and 1794 there was no question of gallantry or love ; too devoted to his country to stoop to human tenderness, he did not, however, entirely forget women, and showed his respect for them by causing the Convention to ordain feast-days in honour of Modesty, Conjugal Fidelity, and of that Love from which he was debarred by the vastness of his task.

IX

THE ALLUREMENTS OF PARIS

THE year 1789 marks Maximilien's first civic triumph, the year when Artois chose him as its deputy to the States-General. His province resounded with the fame of his pleadings, his honesty and energy were well known ; this was sufficient to assure his success. Perhaps at this hour his destiny was revealed to him at a moment when some intangible, feverish unrest was agitating the whole of France ; he may have foreseen the part he was destined to play. What promises are not held out to him by that great and wild future ? What is impossible to his enthusiastic and ardent character ? A new era is opened before him. What may it not hold for him whose eloquence has been crowned in the courts of Artois ?

He set out in May, 1789. The public coach for Paris changed horses at Lefebvre's, a merchant of Arras, and there Robespierre took his place in the coach, paying for it the sum of

35 livres 10 sols. Fouché says, or has allowed it to be said, that he lent him some money for the journey. It is very improbable, for Robespierre was not an impoverished beggar at this time; he had a profession, and he had his family. Supposing that he did require money, is it not more likely that he would have applied to his family—to his aunts? These are trifling matters, but must be spoken of because Maximilien's opponents draw the most astonishing conclusions from them.

His income was modest, there is no doubt of that, and the inventory of his wardrobe, which has been left us, is sufficient proof. We find a black cloth coat, a satin waistcoat in fairly good condition, a waistcoat of *raz de Saint-Maur* rather the worse for wear, three pairs of trousers—one of black velvet, one of black cloth, and one of serge. He possessed six shirts, six collars, six handkerchiefs, three pairs of stockings (one pair almost new), one pair of well-worn shoes, and a new pair. His lawyer's gown, carefully folded, was packed into this small trunk. If we add to this list two clothes-brushes, two shoe-brushes, a box containing silk, cotton, wool, and needles (for he did not scorn to sew on his own buttons), and the bag of powder and a puff, we have the young man's entire wardrobe. The

trunk contained no manuscripts, only a packet of reports for distribution. But he set out with the will to accomplish something, to devote himself to the career he had chosen. All his hopes, all his strength, were centred on this. Four years later he held his country's destiny in his hands.

X

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY OF THE RUE SAINTONGE

ON a bright, clear day the young man from the provinces set out from Arras. His brother, his sister, and his relations, accompanied him to the starting-place. The horses of the heavy stage-coach were stamping and making the bells of their harness ring. Boxes and parcels were piled on the top, ostlers shouted, and the driver swore. People stood at their windows to see the new deputy leave. The latter, in his familiar olive-green gown, stood shaking hands, making promises, dispensing smiles. How many parting injunctions were given him! What puerile fears trouble the hearts of those who love him! The dangers of the town, of that town which was calling the young man, and which would carry him to glory and to the scaffold! The driver cracks his whip; the time has come to start; eyes fill with tears; broken farewells are spoken. The door slams; the driver mounts the box, blows the horn, and

children playing in the streets come running at the sound. Gossiping women gather on the narrow, stone pavement. Old men leaning on sticks come to their doors. The coach starts; white handkerchiefs are waved in prolonged farewells. As the stage passes through the peaceful, sleepy town people salute the new deputy. The hopes of Artois follow him.

The gates of Arras passed, the coach continued its way along the country road. The tall poplar-trees waved in the gentle May breeze; washerwomen, kneeling by the blue shining river, lifted their heads to reply to the driver's jokes. Now and again the shrill notes of the horn rang over the silent country. The steaming horses dashed on. As the uniform beauty of the country passed before his eyes, its charm became more dear to Maximilien; he felt that it was the hopes of a province, of a country in diminutive, that he was charged to defend at Paris. In times of trouble he will have but to think of the countryside of Artois to regain strength and confidence.

At Versailles, where the States-General opened on May 5, Robespierre took up his residence with the other deputies at the Hôtel du Renard, in the Rue Sainte-Élisabeth. When the Assembly met at Paris, he rented a very

modest room in No. 9, Rue de Saintonge, in the parish of Saint-Louis-sur-l'île, as we learn by the signature appended as witness to the marriage certificate of Camille Desmoulins, which took place on September 29, 1790, at Saint-Sulpice. His landlord was called Humbert. We cannot say what the price of this room was, but, however small, it was too expensive for Robespierre, for which reason he took rooms with Pierre Villiers, who sometimes acted as his secretary in a friendly way. Does Charlotte allude to him when she says: "This young man's work necessitated his leaving very early in the morning, and sometimes kept him out very late, so that my brother and he were sometimes several days without seeing one another"? He remained there until July, 1791, at which date he made acquaintance with the Duplay family.

He lived in a very simple way. "Their housekeeping was that of two bachelors who are rarely at home, and have their meals at restaurants," says Charlotte.

In such a life what place had love? Villiers is the only one to throw some light on the matter.

"Robespierre," he writes, "was of an ardent nature, which he never ceased to fight against.

Nearly every night he bathed his pillow in blood. As regards his continence, I never knew him to have relations with any but one, a woman, of about six-and-twenty, who idolized him, and whom he treated more or less badly. Often he refused to admit her."

Who was she, this unknown lady of the Rue de Saintonge? How did Robespierre make her acquaintance? How long did their relations last? Questions to which there can be no reliable answer. All we know is that he paid her. Villiers says: "He gave her a fourth of his fees. Half of the remainder was sent by me to the address of a sister of his at Arras, whom he greatly loved; the other was devoted to household details." M. Hamel does not throw doubt upon this evidence, which appears to him credible enough.

The presence of this woman in his life is in no way surprising. Robespierre was alone in Paris, with no friends save Villiers, absent most of the time. It is only natural that he should have sought to replace something of the affection and tenderness which surrounded him at Arras. Here in Paris there were no young ladies to whom he could address gallant epistles enclosed with his reports and pleadings; no drawing-room where he could shine as a poet, and win

hearts by witty and tender sallies ; nothing was left. At Paris he was merely a provincial deputy, at Arras the glory of the Bar. He turned, therefore, in his timidity to a poor unknown, humble creature to find that affection for which his homesick nature craved, that consolation which his young, ardent, overburdened soul required. Loving and loved by her, what is more natural than that he should help—in fact, support her ?

That Robespierre needed friendly intimacy is clearly evident at this period. Friend of Camille Desmoulins, by the grace of the Parisians Procurator-General of the Lanterne, he was received by Lucile's mother. Lucile left this domestic and cordial circle to follow her beloved Camille, bequeathing her smile to her young sister Adèle. Why should not Robespierre be as happy as Camille ? Was he in love with Adèle ? It is possible ; in any case, marriage was spoken of. Robespierre brother-in-law to Camille ! Who knows whether in that case so much blood would have been spilt in the holocaust of 16 Germinal ? This intimacy, this love, these plans, will be recalled to Robespierre by Mme. Duplessis on the eve of Lucile's execution, in a letter, which, however, did not reach him :

“ Robespierre, if you are not a tiger with a man’s face, if you are not so intoxicated by Camille’s blood as to be demented, if you can still remember our friendly evenings, if you can remember the caresses you lavished on little Horace (Camille’s son), whom you used to nurse on your knees, if you can remember that you were to be my son-in-law, spare an innocent victim.” The letter was not sent.

Lucile’s fair head was severed from her body on 24 Germinal. Does not her mother’s letter reveal an atmosphere of charming intimacy ? We see Robespierre tempted to seek at the Duplessis’ the domestic atmosphere of Arras, to yield to the tenderness of his heart, to talk of marriage—which he was free to do since Anaïs Deshorties was married—to dream of a home life always denied him. He will ever be the guest of strangers, whether at the house of Desmoulins’ mother-in-law or at Duplay’s. His political career will for ever stand between him and wife and child ; he must live alone, die alone.

Even in this chapter we must speak again of fables ; one of the most curious and least known has recently been republished quite seriously. It deals with the pretended loves of Robespierre and a Lady-in-Waiting to Marie-Antoinette, to whom he was affianced. Our romancer relates

that one day, when the two were together at Trianon, Robespierre was so free with the young lady that the marriage was immediately broken off. His fiancée went out of her mind ; but it appears that she long survived her mishap, and was an inmate of Dr. Blanche's asylum. What is one to believe of this story ? Well, nothing. Is it necessary to give reasons ? No date is given, no name, no reference. We may safely believe that a mad woman, formerly Lady-in-Waiting to Marie-Antoinette, was an inmate of Dr. Blanche's establishment ; but the rest of the story, and others similar to it, are so absurd as to need no refutation.

This ends Maximilien de Robespierre's love affairs until his entry into Duplay's house.



MARIE-ANTOINETTE

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XI

THE RISE OF JACOBINISM

WHEN he entered this new family, he was already on the road to fresh glory. He was no longer the lawyer of Arras, but the orator of the Jacobins, already known as the Incorruptible. The title was first conferred upon him at the exhibition of pictures of 1791, and made a great stir.

It appears under the pastel portrait of Robespierre painted by Mme. Labille-Guyard. The latter has an elegant brush, combining charm and strength, which gives a unique character to her works. In the studio of the delicate La Tour she learnt to give to the faces of her models a certain grace, which does not destroy the feminine touch in the work, and which has been frequently criticized.

Robespierre answered by a gracious note Mme. Labille-Guyard's request for a few hours' sitting. It is in the same style as those he was wont to write at Arras to the pretty readers

of his reports. The madrigal to Ophelia is not more courteously gallant.

“PARIS,

“*February 13, 1791.*

“I hear that the Graces wish to paint my portrait. I should be unworthy of the favour if I did not fully realize its value. Nevertheless, since an overwhelming press of business, or since some jealous god, has prevented me as yet from displaying my eagerness, apologies must precede the homage I owe them. I pray them, therefore, graciously to accept the first, and to make known to me the days and hours when I may tender the latter.

“ROBESPIERRE.”

The Salon of 1791 was especially remarkable, and the exhibition has never attracted such crowds of sight-seers. Three hundred and twenty-one works were exhibited, one hundred and ninety-nine being paintings, ninety-six sculpture, and twenty-six engravings.

Among the sculpture was the bust of the King by M. de Seine, and that of the Dauphin by the Queen, but the paintings were the most successful. David is represented by three canvases: the Horaces, Brutus, and the Death of Socrates—the ancient days of heroism; but

contemporary heroism was the most appreciated, as the exhibition contained the formidable sketch of the "Serment du Jeu de Paume."

David's spirit contrasts with the charming elegance of Mme. Vigée-Lebrun, who sent the portrait of Pasiello from Rome. Portraits were numerous: Latude, by Vestier (No. 104); Greuze, by Giroust (No. 106); and Mme. Labille-Guyard exhibited thirteen portraits, under the title of "Plusieurs députés à l'Assemblée nationale," numbered 72 to 84. Here we have Talleyrand (holding papers on which is written: "Liberty of religion, liberty of education"), de Beaumetz, Charles de Lameth, Alexandre de Lameth, Barnave, de La Borde, de Broglie, Alexandre de Beauharnais, d'Aiguillon, Duport, Chabron, Salomon, and Robespierre. The picture had considerable success. The title of Incorruptible under the portrait of the man whose statue had been carried in triumph after the success of the Champ de Mars, a few weeks before, was greeted with applause—a success which lasted, because, in the year II., the portrait of Robespierre published by Drouhin, which speedily became popular, was taken from this painting.

A portrait now defaced, unknown, forgotten, from behind its dusty glass, in a lumber-room

of the Palace of Versailles, it speaks to the faithful hearts who remember that bygone triumph of 1791, that happy year when the future seemed full of brilliant promise for Robespierre.

He was not, however, safe from mockery and wounding epigrams. As a native of Artois, he was known to the pamphleteers of the "Actes des Apôtres" as "the candle of Arras," just as Mirabeau was known as "the torch of Provence." The same melody runs through all the attacks on him—the same tune, with mocking variations. We find it in a parody of "Athalie," where a provincial reviews the members of the democratic party in the Assembly in the following terms :

"And *Gregory* protects the usurer's due,
But in his zeal doth persecute the Jew.
Bailly, descended from the heavens above,
Carries the sceptre of a people's love.
Lameth, to convent lead by his great heart,
Plays over fifty monks the Conqueror's part.
Lameth, repeating in each cell with ease
The works of Theseus and Hercules.
Sublime Liegè and old Thouret plan
With compass neatly all the Rights of Man,
And Robespierre (*sic*) what heroic sight
Spreads o'er the land his *holy candle light*."

A note tells us that it refers to "M. de Robespierre, Demosthenes of Arras," with a notice

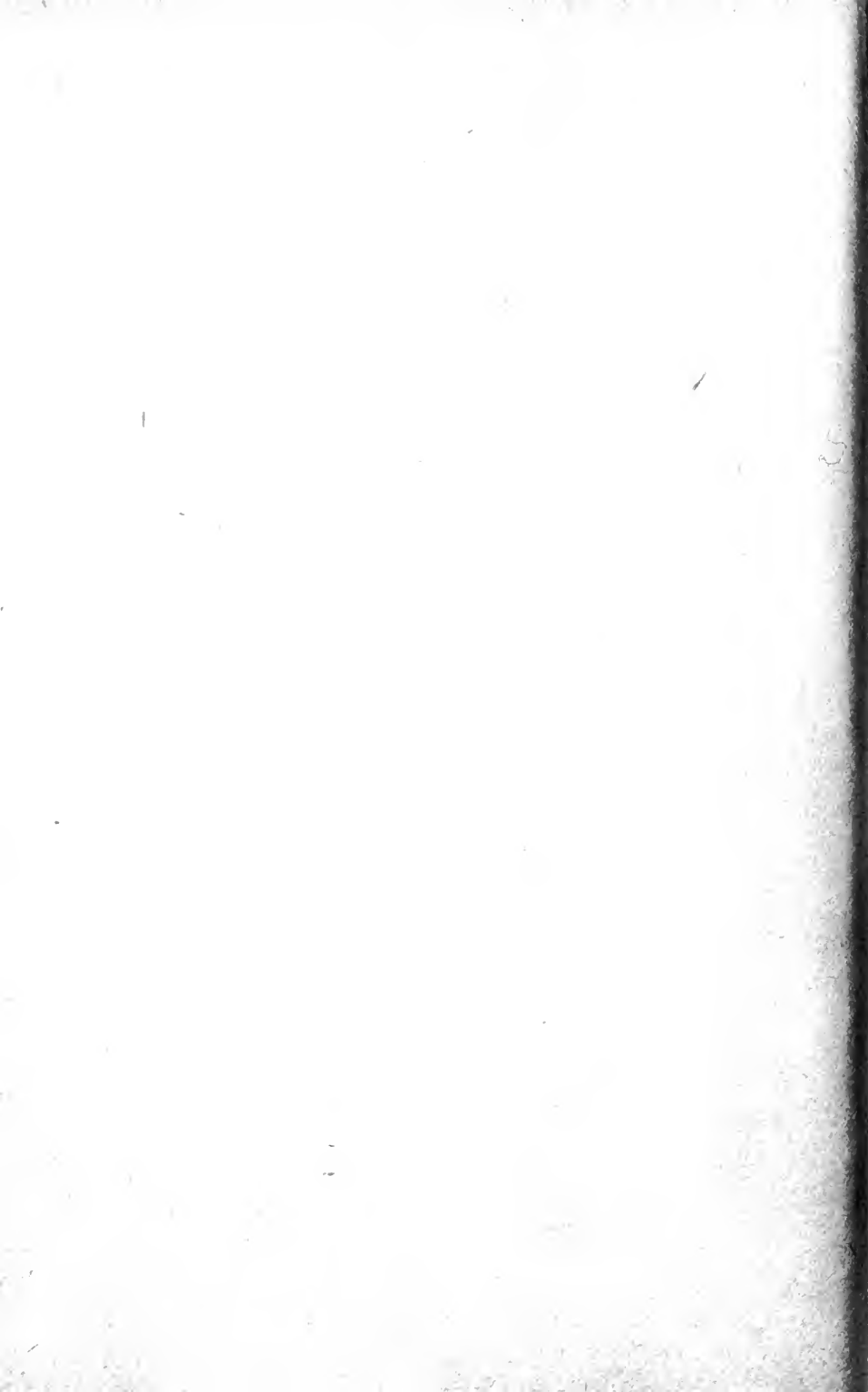
to the effect that "A subscription has been opened in his country to erect a bronze statue to him. It will contain the reliquary of the holy candle." Mockery is a sign of popularity. Robespierre's was on the increase, and continued to increase until he was consecrated the first, the greatest Jacobin of the republic. Thenceforward, from his entrance into the Dupaly family, every moment of his life, day by day, is open to history. His coming to the house brought on it glory and disaster. If the humble carpenter who offered him a refuge on the night of July 17, 1791, is not entirely forgotten, he owes it to Robespierre. The house is sacred to all posterity.

How came he there? July 17, 1791, which Bailly was to expiate in so terrible a fashion two years later—on 21 Brumaire, year II.—saw the red flag of martial law displayed on the Champ de Mars. A reaction seemed on foot against the leaders of the revolutionary movement, of which Danton and Robespierre were the chiefs. In the evening the court of the Jacobins was invaded by artillerymen—*chasseurs de barrières*, blind instruments of the fury of Lafayette and his partisans. Upon leaving the meeting with Le Cointre (of Versailles) and Lapoype, Robespierre, says Fréron

in his note to Courtois, was afraid of returning to the Rue de Saintonge. He asked Le Cointre to show him some house near the Tuileries where he might spend the night, and Le Cointre took him to the house of a Jacobin, the carpenter Duplay, a few steps from where they were, at No. 366, Rue Saint-Honoré, facing the Church of the Assumption. Robespierre accepted the offer, and went with his two companions to Duplay's. "This is my house," said the carpenter; "you are at home here, and with a patriot." The table was laid; from the garden of an adjoining convent came the smell of box; the lamp was lit. As the hunted man sat down, he was welcomed by the smiles of three young girls.

It was from this house that he went to his death on 9 Thermidor. He lived there three years and ten days.

BOOK II
THE LOVE OF ELÉONORE



I

THE DUPLAYS

No. 366, Rue Saint-Honoré, now 398, belonged before the Revolution to a community of nuns, the Dames de la Conception, whose grounds adjoined the house. Both the number and the house have been the subject of controversy. Lefevre says 396; Louis Lazare says between 382 and 384, but gives no fixed number.

The controversy between Messrs. Sardou and Hamel has decided the point, and definitely established that the Duplay house is still standing, and the rooms more or less as they were.

Duplay was not without means, for he was the owner of three houses—one in the Rue des Mathurins, let at 6,500 francs; another in the Rue de l'Arcade, let at 3,000 francs; and another in the Rue du Luxembourg, with an annex in the Rue d'Angoulême, let at 5,600 francs. In 1779 he took No. 366, Rue Saint-Honoré, on a lease of nine years, which lease was drawn up by Messrs. Choron and Dutard. There he set

up his workshop, and the style in which he lived shows clearly that his business prospered. No doubt his income was decreased during the Terror, as, by a letter from his wife to their daughter, we hear that Duplay has had to take up his work again, because his houses are tenantless.

He was one of those whom the Revolution did not enrich. The events of Thermidor brought disaster on him. All the family were arrested. The mother died or committed suicide in prison ; Duplay, involved in the Fouquier-Tinville case, was brought before the tribunal of the Revolution, and acquitted ; and when the remnants of the family met again, he was on the verge of ruin. He proved himself to be a man of honour. He sold his houses to satisfy his creditors, and made considerable sacrifices, of which his son says later : " Question all my father's creditors, and especially the two principal ones : M. Le Dure, surveyor of lands, whose political principles have never been suspect, and who, however, professes for his former debtor an esteem which comes close to veneration ; and M. de La Coste, now an old man verging on ninety, who was so touched by my father's conduct that he reduced his debt by 20,000 francs."

When Babeuf's conspiracy was discovered, Duplay, his son, and his nephew, were again arrested, because, in drawing up the list of his future Cabinet, Babeuf had made Duplay's son Chancellor of the Exchequer. Duplay junior was then seventeen ! This cost the three men thirteen months' imprisonment. When they were released they were ruined men, and Duplay had to start life again.

Beaudot, who does not love them, because he does not love Robespierre, says : " The Duplays were very honest citizens." Such was the family that welcomed Maximilien.

II

THE FAMILY

THE head of the family was a man of fifty-three. A certificate of identification (*certificat de né*) given him by the civil commission of his section, the Section des Piques, sitting in what was formerly known as the Place Vendôme, describes him as a man of 5 feet 6 inches, about Robespierre's height, with chestnut hair and eyebrows, oval face, high forehead, blue eyes, long nose, large mouth, and round chin.

Less than to any other would Robespierre be unknown to him in 1791, for Duplay was a Jacobin, and it appears that he frequently took his wife to their meetings.

Mme. Duplay's maiden name was Veaugeois, and her father was a well-known carpenter of Choisy. It was perhaps Duplay's trade which moved Mlle. Veaugeois to choose him for her husband. She brought him a dowry of 4,000 francs. Duplay himself had means.

The marriage was a happy one, and four

daughters and a son were born of it. The son was born in 1778, and was called Maurice. One daughter, Sophie, had left home, and was married to M. Auzat, a lawyer of Issoire, who, it appears, styled himself a jurisconsult. M. Auzat was an ardent Royalist; nevertheless he was imprisoned after 9 Thermidor, because his wife had the misfortune to be called Duplay.

The eldest daughter was called Eléonore, her pet name being Cornélie. She was born in 1771, and after the family disasters her life dragged on in disillusionment until 1832. Her sister Elizabeth was born on August 26, 1773. She became Mme. Le Bas, and has left many curious and intimate details of the Duplay family.

Philippe Le Bas, "personally gentle enough," was a fine man, 5 feet 6 inches in height, with chestnut hair and eyebrows, a thick nose, middle-sized mouth, long chin, oval face, and high forehead. Robespierre loved him. He was received into the Duplays' house, and on August 26, 1793, married Elizabeth. They made a charming and united couple. On 9 Thermidor Le Bas proved his fidelity to the Jacobin ideal and to Maximilien. On that tragic night he freed himself at the Hôtel de Ville with a pistol-shot, leaving his wife preg-

nant. The son who was born was Philippe Le Bas, tutor of the future Napoleon III., and member of the Institute. Elizabeth mourned her young husband, swept away by the revolutionary storm, for half a century.

The fourth daughter, Victoire, did not marry, and is lost to sight. According to Michelet, "the Duplay women were lively, tender, and imperious." Imperious, yes—but by friendship, by tenderness, by devotion, to Robespierre. They nicknamed him "Bon Ami." As to him, he had found a second family among these upright, honest people. The orphan of Arras lived no more a solitary life in Paris; he was surrounded by the warm and cordial atmosphere of the Duplays.

"He had a profound respect for my father and mother," says Mme. Le Bas, "and they looked on him as a son, and we as a brother." Farther on she adds: "Poor friend! you felt a son's tender affection for my parents, and for us a brother's love. We returned it, for indeed we loved you truly."

And to M. Sardou, who knew her as an old woman, she again repeated: "You would surely have loved him. He was so kind, so affectionate to young people." Thereupon M. Sardou, with unconscious humour, exclaims:

THE
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AETATIS



PHILIPPE LE BAS

To face page 102

TO VINO
ALPACILLAO

“ Which Robespierre had she known ? ” . Poor man ! Robespierre was still to him the tiger, the bloodthirsty monster, the terror of 1820.

It is difficult to compel Robespierre’s detractors to admit the purity of his life. How hard they find it to allow that none had a greater respect for home and family than he ! And yet it was not only when the earth of the graveyard of Errancis had covered his mutilated body that these qualities were attributed to him ; they were recognized in his lifetime. And if we know this, we owe the knowledge to the Thermidorians themselves, to whom it was a grievance. Courtois himself published the paragraphs we quote lower, in which certain citizens beg Robespierre to stand sponser to their children. What a revelation these letters are ! How eloquently their dates speak ! January 31, 1792, marks the commencement of Robespierre’s glory ; 5 Messidor, year II., a fortnight before his fall, marks the apogee. It is such evidence as this that we must weigh when scrutinizing so high a destiny.

The first letter comes from a resident of Paris :

“ A citizen, admirer of your virtues and of your patriotism, who holds, and will always

104 ROBESPIERRE AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED
glory in holding, your principles, takes the liberty to write to you, and to beg that you will honour him by giving your name in baptism—a name so dear to your country, the name of one who has defended the innocent with such energy—to an innocent being about to be born to him. A being whom he hopes to rear for the State, under the patronage of a godfather who has given such numerous proofs of his talent, his patriotism—in fact, of all the virtues one expects from the zeal and honour of an incorruptible legislator, whose name is and ever will be venerated in the present and in future centuries. Your fellow-citizen hopes for this favour from the restorer of French liberty. It is the greatest honour a friend of liberty can pay to one whose gratitude will equal his feelings of brotherhood.

“ D——, MEMBRE DU CLUB DES
CORDELIERS, ET MARCHAND
MERCIER.

“ PARIS,
“ *January, 1792.*”

The second letter, equally significant, comes from a member of the Directoire of the Montpelier district :

"To Maximilien Robespierre, Member of the Commission of Public Health, Author of the Report of 18 Floréal :

"Nature has given me a son. I have dared to lay on him the burden of your name. May he be as useful, as dear to his country, as you are! My hopes, a father's hopes, can go no farther.

"Greeting and fraternity. Long live the Republic !

"J. M——."

What value these letters add to Mme. Le Bas's memoirs, sometimes declared to be too indulgent !

Another member of the family was Simon Duplay, Duplay's nephew, nicknamed "Simon of the wooden leg." He was an ardent and very intelligent young man. He enlisted as a volunteer from the beginning of the Revolution, and lost his left leg at the Battle of Valmy. Duplay gave him shelter in 1792, and Robespierre engaged him as his secretary. Nodier, who knew him, says, however, "that it was impossible for him to write a passable letter." He died in obscurity in 1826, without leaving a single line in remembrance of the great man whom he had known.

Such was this family, opposed to display and splendour, excellent bourgeois of the *ancien régime*, who lived in peace and died without glory in their own homes. A united, upright, charming family—no one has denied it. The following paragraph will show what reactionary Thermidorians thought of the matter :

“Duplaix was a poor carpenter, who never dreamt of the part he would play in the Revolution. At the time of the Constituent Assembly Robespierre came to lodge in his house, and made a zealous partisan of him. Father, mother, sons, daughters, male cousins, female cousins, etc., swore by Robespierre alone. The latter, out of gratitude, made the father a *juré-assassin* under the direction of Fouquier-Tinville; the two sons were bodyguards under Boulanger, Captain of his guards. Mother Duplaix was made superioress of the devotees of Robespierre, and the daughters were chosen as leaders of this worthy army.”

III

ATTENTIONS FOR THE GUEST

ELIZABETH DUPLAY has told us that her parents looked upon Robespierre as a son. There was no care or attention that they did not show on his behalf. They were quite conscious of the importance of him they sheltered. "In the carpenter's family," says the anonymous German from whom we have already quoted, "he is like the child of the house. The woman took his mother's place, and provided him with all he wanted." Fréron, in his note on Courtois, says that the Duplays worshipped him. "They ruined him by exciting his pride." The fact seems incontestable, all the more that Charlotte Robespierre, who disliked the Duplays, acknowledged that these ladies "took the most lively interest in her brother, and surrounded him with a thousand tender cares." She adds that Robespierre "was extremely sensitive to this sort of thing." The adoration went as far as sequestration. Here the evidence of the leader

of the gilded youth is not to be doubted, for there are a thousand ways for us to examine it. "Once at the Duplays," he wrote, "little by little he became invisible—they kept him out of sight." It was because of this that Mme. Duplay and Charlotte Robespierre fell out. It shows to what degree the carpenter's family had become attached to the member of the National Convention, what care they took to keep away from him all that was dangerous and troublesome. Was it not because of this that the outrage of Cécile Renault in Prairial of the year II. was forestalled? Augustin, the brother of Robespierre, was elected by Paris as deputy to the National Convention on September 17, 1792. He was the nineteenth on the list of twenty-four deputies. His nomination found him at Arras, where he was a member of the Council of Administration of the Department of Pas-de-Calais. He was also the President of the Jacobins. A week later—September 25—he left Arras to take his seat. He could not leave Charlotte alone in a house without her brothers, so he decided to take her with him. Arriving at Paris, they stopped at the Duplays' in unfurnished rooms looking on the street. Charlotte was quick to perceive what she calls the "ascendancy" of the Duplays over the "good

nature of my brother, if I may so express myself." She was troubled to see herself taking a back seat—she, the sister of the Incorruptible ! It was a very womanly feeling. One must forgive her. What should she do ? Submit ? Certainly, at first she did think of that ; but thinking of a thing is not doing it. Then she began a hard campaign against the Duplays for Maximilien. What did she tell him ? " I tried to make him understand that in his position, and occupying such a high rank in politics, he ought to have a home of his own." The argument was again a feminine one, of which it seems that Maximilien acknowledged the justice ; but he fought against it for a long time, in fear of hurting the feelings of the Duplays. Charlotte says so. But what woman wants . . . Robespierre gave in to his sister, and she, victorious over Mme. Duplay and her daughters, took him away in triumph to hired rooms in the Rue Saint-Florentin, not far from the Convention.

Of his brief sojourn in this house we know nothing, except that he was ill there. " His illness was not serious." This short illness of Robespierre must not be confused with the one which kept him in bed from the end of Pluviôse to the middle of Ventôse of the year II., and

which was looked upon in Paris as a veritable calamity. We shall have occasion to speak of that later.

However, this slight indisposition alarmed Mme. Duplay. She hurried to the Rue Florentin, quite upset at the idea of any possible danger, and making "a great fuss that she had not been informed." Charlotte's reception of her may be easily imagined. But she had a very strong opponent, and the two women said things to each other which Charlotte agrees were "very unkind." Robespierre was worried between them. What was he to do? Should he, for a whim of Charlotte's, show discourtesy to people who had given him such a cordial welcome? Should he give base ingratitude in return for all their care and attention?

"They love me so much," he said, "they show me so much consideration and so much kindness, it would be ingratitude on my part to repulse them." And he went back to the Duplays.

Charlotte, angry and furious, stayed on in the Rue Florentin with Augustin. She went, however, of course, to see Maximilien in the Rue Saint-Honoré. There were fresh scenes with Mme. Duplay, in which Eléonore took part. On the other hand, Victoire and Elizabeth con-

soled Charlotte for the outrages she inflicted on herself on each occasion. But one day the cup overflowed. She had sent Maximilien some pots of jam by her servant. The servant handed the consignment to Mme. Duplay. The good lady, very angry, and doubtless very pleased to be able to finish with Charlotte once and for all, put the servant and the jam outside the door, declaring : "Take it away ! She shall not poison Robespierre !"

And she was right. Charlotte never again set foot in the house. Should she return to Arras—leave Paris and these Duplays who had robbed her of Maximilien ? If she entertained that idea for a moment, Augustin took upon himself to rid her of it. The Committee of Public Safety had just entrusted him and Ricord with an important mission in the South, where the federalist disturbances demanded severe repression. He took Charlotte with him, and Ricord took his young wife. But before the journey was ended Charlotte had quarrelled and fallen out with Mme. Ricord. She reproached her for her impertinent frivolity, and a lady "who was no better than she was" said to Charlotte : "You are too virtuous to remain here." She did not let them say it twice. She says that Mme. Ricord showed her a forged

letter from her brother, telling her to go away ; and, leaving her brother there, she went back to Paris, where Augustin rejoined her only at the end of 1793, after the Jacobin victory at Toulon.

It was towards the middle of February, 1794, that Robespierre was ill. What this sudden illness was, and the cause of it, is not known. But the fact that it kept the Incorruptible in his room gave rise to public manifestations, of which the resolutions of the different branches, and the reports of observers of the public mind, have preserved the echo.

On 29 Pluviôse Inspector Dugast notes in his report : " News was brought to the Jacobins that Robespierre had passed a bad night, and that Couthon was very ill. The sad impression which this news made on the members of the society proved how dear these worthy republicans are to them." The same day the branch of the Unity decided to send citizens Genty, Louis, Minet, and Lucas, to inquire after the health of the two members of the Convention.

The same decision was arrived at by the section of the " Piques," which sent two young citizens, Cerf and Marche, and two older citizens, Petit and Perrier, who received the commission

to bring news of the health of a citizen, "warm with friendship and brotherly feeling for one of the most worthy republicans."

On 1 Ventôse the daily police report makes these observations: "Near the Jardin des Plantes a large group of men talked about Robespierre's illness. The people were so grieved by it that they said that, if Robespierre happened to die, all would be lost. A woman said that only he was able to baffle the plans of rogues. God alone can prolong the days of this incorruptible patriot (here everybody sighed). I remarked, when one of the Sans-Culottes spoke of the illness of Robespierre, that the well-dressed men said nothing, but you could see a pleased expression on their faces." The same day there were rumours of poisoning: "There is great fear for the lives of Robespierre and Couthon; already a thousand different conjectures have arisen about them. Slander has already spoken of poison. Others say that it was after some work that the fever entered their blood. One wishes to know exactly what this illness is that keeps them in bed, as, naturally, the true friends of the republic are very interested. When persons known to each other meet, after having said 'Good-day,' they ask each other for news of Robespierre and

Couthon. It is almost incredible how interested people are in these men. They also say what an immense gap the death of these men would make." We have many other reports about that same day. Everyone was taken up with the great question which took precedence of all others : How is Robespierre ?

"To-day they say that Robespierre is worse, and this news has upset true friends of the *Republic* very much." The next day, 2 Ventôse, three reports notice the spirit of the public in this direction : "We are assured that Robespierre is better to-day—that his illness was not at all the same as Couthon's. The eyes of the people are turned on these two citizens. Everywhere they ask news of them." Another report confirms this improvement : "They say that Robespierre is much better, and that he has been out to-day." Last night's rumours of the poison are still circulating. "Everyone whispers that Robespierre has been poisoned, but the antidotes they made him take at once lead us to hope that we shall soon see him still more radiant with glory." On 2 Ventôse it was announced that Robespierre had been out ; on 4 Ventôse the people rejoiced exceedingly : "The people were very uneasy about Robespierre's illness, and now show their joy because several

citizens say that he has been out of doors. As a deputy he is a treasure to the people ; he loves them, and they trust him." The Popular Society of the Temple only heard of the illness of the Incorruptible on 7 Ventôse. On the following day the society sent a deputation of six members, "vested with the authority of the society," to obtain news. The same evening the Jacobins rejoice on hearing that Robespierre and Couthon are "getting better and better." On 9 Ventôse the branch of the Fraternity order the messenger Lebout to go to Robespierre's dwelling. The same day new rumours of a bad omen are circulated. Inspector Rollin informs the Ministry of the Interior : "Yesterday the report that Robespierre was much worse was circulated, although we know that he is much better. The report that he had been poisoned was added." There was a new deputation on 11 of Ventôse. The branch of the Fraternity sent the messenger Frémiot to bring news, which henceforth are better and better every day ; for on March 15 following (25 Ventôse) Maximilien goes into the gallery to encourage failing patriotism, with regard to the arrest of Péré Duchesne.

What can be more significant than these few quotations to show how truly popular Robe-

spierre was ? The Duplays, by surrounding him so strictly, justify the word "sequestration" used by Fréron. Charlotte had relinquished nothing of her spite against them. Augustin, coming back from his mission in the South, had informed Maximilien fully of their sister's conduct ; and, anxious to avoid any sharp discord, he had arranged for board and lodging with his friends the Ricords. He stayed only a few weeks, and then started on a mission to the Haute Saône, Doubs, and Jura. In the last days of Floréal, year II., he returned to Paris. He was soon made cognizant of the reports that Charlotte had circulated about him and Maximilien. She accused her brothers of tyranny and oppression in their relations with her, reproaching them with bad treatment which only existed in her imagination. Augustin warned his elder brother in a letter devoid of any kind feeling for Charlotte :

"My sister has not one drop of blood like ours. I have heard and seen so much of her that I look upon her as our greatest enemy. She takes advantage of our spotless reputation to domineer over us, and to threaten to do something scandalous to compromise us. We must make a decided stand against her. We

must force her to go to Arras, and so keep the woman who is our despair far away from us. She would like to be able to say that we are bad brothers ; her slander, circulated against us, aims only at this. I wish you could see the citizeness Lasaudraie ; she would give you information on all the disguises which it is interesting to know in these circumstances. A certain Saint-Félix appears to be of the clique.”

Maximilien, even by Charlotte’s account, did not speak of anything to her ; at the same time, he had shown his disapproval of her. She, on the other hand, took care not to ask him for any explanation when she visited him in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Augustin’s letter made Maximilien understand Charlotte’s intrigues, and he decided to force her to return to Arras, as his brother advised him, and entrusted Joseph Lebon, the priest who became a member of the Convention and envoy in the Pas-de-Calais, to accompany her.

Why send Charlotte to Arras, and why, above all, in the care of that terrible Lebon, if it were not to have her “ guillotined ” on arrival ?

This absurdity is still believed, and repeated without check, as if it were a certain indisputable fact. The careful reading of Augustin’s letter is sufficient answer to this accusa-

tion. "She would like to be able to say that we are bad brothers," he said. Does not that show that he did not wish to pass for a bad brother? Charlotte's intrigues and conversations—for, after all, she was only a woman—can compromise the unsullied reputation of the two brothers. Let her go back to Arras. The Robespierres must not be suspected in Paris.

We have just seen that Maximilien consented to her departure. As soon as she heard this decision, Charlotte hastened to write to Augustin. Regretting this letter later, she tried to deny it, to lessen its range. She wrote it, and it was written by her faithful Laponneraye; she threw doubt upon the authentic draft, she disputed the validity of certain sentences—those italicized in the text which follows. This was when she saw the sun of the dead rise for Maximilien and Augustin—the dawn of re-establishment. The woman Duplay was dead; Eléonore was growing old, forgotten in some corner; and she alone, the sister of the Robespierres, could call the fidelity of remembrance to witness with splendour. But she forgot that her letter of Messidor, year II., the deed of accusation of a soured, spiteful woman, was resting in a portfolio in the Archives, and that her tardy denial would be one day given the lie by this

light yellowed waif, left behind by the Terror.
Here is the letter :

“ 18 *Messidor*,
“ *Year II. of the French Republic.*

“ Your *aversion* for me, my brother, far from growing less, as I flattered myself it would, has become *the most implacable hatred*, so that the very sight of me fills you with *horror*. As I cannot hope that you will ever be calm enough to listen to me, I am going to try to write to you. Crushed beneath the weight of my grief, incapable of coherent thought, I shall not undertake my ‘*apologia*.’ However, it will be very easy for me to show you that I have never deserved, in any way, to excite the *rage which makes you blind* ; but I leave the work of my justification to time, which exposes all treachery and all obscurity. When the bandage which covers your eyes is torn off—then, if *in the confusion of your passions you are able to recognize the voice of remorse*, if the call of Nature is able to make itself heard, when you have recovered from the delusion which has been so disastrous to me, do not fear that I shall ever reproach you for having laboured under it so long. I shall only think of the happiness of having regained your affection. Ah ! if you could only read my heart,

you would blush to insult it so cruelly! You would see, not only the proof of my innocence, but that nothing can efface the tender relationship which binds me to you, and that relationship is the only feeling in which all my affections are engaged; otherwise should I complain of your *hatred*? What would it matter to me if I were hated by those to whom I am indifferent, and whom I despise! The thought of them would not trouble me. But to be hated by my brothers, whom I desire to cherish, that is the only thing able to make me as wretched as I am.

“How fearful must this passion of *hatred* be, since it is able to blind you to such a degree that you *slander* me to my friends! However, do not hope, in your delirium, to make me lose the esteem of a few virtuous persons—all that remains to me. With a clear consciousness of my own virtue, I can challenge you to injure that, and I venture to tell you that, with respectable people who know me, you will lose your own reputation rather than injure mine.

“So, then, it is necessary to your peace of mind that I should leave you—even necessary, according to what is said openly, that I should not live in Paris! I do not know yet what I am going to do; but that which seems very urgent is that you should get rid of an odious

sight. After to-morrow, then, you can go to your rooms without fear of meeting me there ; I shall leave them to-day—at least, if you do not expressly oppose my so doing.

“ Do not allow my stay in Paris to worry you ; I shall take good care not to mix my friends up in my misfortune. The ill-luck which pursues me must be catching, *and your hatred for me is too blind not to be carried on to everything which takes some interest in me.* I only require a few days in which to set my ideas in order, to decide on my place of exile, for, in the annihilation of all my faculties, I am unable to make up my mind.

“ *I leave you because you exact it ;* but, in spite of your injustice, my friendship for you is so indestructible that I shall hold no resentment *of the cruel treatment that you mete out to me.* When, sooner or later undeceived, you shall have the feeling for me which I deserve, let no false shame prevent you from informing me that I have regained your love ; and wherever I may be, *even beyond the seas*, if I can be useful to you in any way, let me know, and I will come to you at once.

“ CHARLOTTE.

“ P.S.—You must know that, in leaving your lodgings, I shall take all necessary precautions

not to compromise my brothers. The quarter in which citizeness Laporte dwells, with whom I propose to live for the time being, is the one spot in the republic where I am most unknown.”

This citizeness Laporte—or, rather, Delaporte—was the wife of a judge of the Revolutionary Tribunal, François-Louis-Marie Delaporte, who was included in the Revolutionary Tribunal. Beginning his duty at the end of Messidor, he only sat four or five times. That is what saved him. He was acquitted on 17 Floréal, year III. Charlotte was still at his house when the thunderbolt of 9 Thermidor fell on Paris, and made havoc of the fortune of Maximilien.

IV

THREE YEARS OF POLITICAL LIFE

PERHAPS it would not be out of place to outline this fortune, and the progress and the certain continuity of it, for the life of Robespierre and his glory offer a wonderful picture of a straight line with a regular rise never hindered.

The first brilliance is, in October, 1790, his nomination as President of the Tribunal of the District of Versailles, by which nomination the patriots of Versailles answer a pretended disgrace of the people of Artois for Maximilien. The Royalists soon began to sing comic songs about it :

“ Robespierre is judge at Versailles,
Worthy patron of the mob ;
He will judge for better or worse
These insolent menials.
But they will disgrace him without fail,
And when the cock crows
They will hang him with Le Coi(n)tre,
And justice shall be done.”

He, however, preferred the post of Public Prosecutor in the Criminal Court of the Department of Paris, and obtained it—to send in his

resignation shortly—and his old comrade of Louis-le-Grand's, Duport-Dutertre, took his place at Versailles. Seven months later, May 19, 1792, appeared the first number of *The Defender of the Constitution*, by Maximilien Robespierre, Deputy in the Constitutional Assembly, in octavo, from the printing-press of Pierre-Jacques Duplain, Cour du Commerce. The subscription was 36 francs a year, 21 francs for six months, and 12 francs for three months. The first number contained the statement of the principles of the editor :

“ It is the Constitution that I wish to defend—the Constitution as it stands. They ask me why I declared myself the defender of a work the defects of which I have often shown up. I answer that, as a member of the Constitutional Assembly, I have set myself with all my strength against all the decrees which public opinion proscribes to-day, but that, from the moment when the Constitutional Bill was passed and cemented by public opinion, I have always limited my action to demand for it a faithful execution.” If he decides thus every Thursday to publish his political thought, it is because he is convinced that everyone owes something to public life, and that no one has the right to elude any civic duties. It has been excellently

well said, and it applies to Robespierre above all that: "Journalism in the time of the Revolution was essentially a Court of Law; one was then a political writer, and not a seller of newspapers."

Journalist! but Robespierre is not the only journalist! Ten, twenty of his colleagues are with him in the breach, pen in hand. Carra draws up *Les Annales Patriotiques*; Condorcet, *La Chronique du Mois*; Brissot, *Le Patriote Français*; Gorsas, *Le Courier des Départements*; Barère, *Le Point du Jour, ou Recueil de ce qui s'est passé la Veille à l'Assemblée Nationale*; Marat, *L'Ami du Peuple*; Desmoulins, *Les Résolutions de France et de Brabant*; Robert, *Le Mercure National*; Tallien, *L'Ami des Citoyens*; Audouin, *Le Journal Universel*; Dulaure, *Le Thermomètre du Jour*; Lequinio, *Le Journal des Laboureurs*; Rabaud Saint-Étienne, *La Feuille Villageoise*; Louvet, *La Sentinelle*; Villette, *La Chronique de Paris*; Fauchet, *La Bouche de Fer*—they all throw to the people these pages which sow the good seed, and make the new liberty spring up on French soil.

The twelfth part of *Le Défenseur de la Constitution*,* which relates the events of August 10, gives notice of the disappearance of the weekly sheet: "Actual circumstances and the approach

* The Defender of the Constitution.

126 ROBESPIERRE AND THE WOMEN HE LOVED

of the National Convention seem to warn us that the title *Le Défenseur de la Constitution* no longer suits this work ; we have declared from the beginning that we did not wish to defend the defects of the Constitution of 1791, but the principles thereof. Our aim has never been to defend it against the will of the people, who could and ought to make it perfect ; but against the Court and the enemies of liberty, who wish to destroy and injure it. We shall continue this work under a title more suitable to the present juncture.” And this is the end of that paper which, as even Desessarts said, brought Maximilien great popularity.

The tenth day of August, which saw the fall of royalty, did not see Robespierre desert in the hour of danger. He was there in the first rank in the place he had assumed, and when they say that he hid himself, when they say that he was afraid, they lie. And is there any doubt ? This answers the accusation :

COMMUNE OF PARIS
YEAR II. OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC,
AUGUST 10, 1793.

MEDAL GIVEN BY THE MUNICIPALITY OF PARIS
IN MEMORY OF THE 10TH OF AUGUST, 1792,
TO THE CITIZEN ROBESPIERRE,
MEMBER OF THE COMMUNE OF AUGUST 10.

COULOMBEAU,
Secretary-Recorder.

The warrant is accompanied by this letter :

“ COMMUNE OF PARIS,
*“ Friday, August 16, 1793—Year III. of
 the French Republic.*

“ CITIZEN,

“ I hasten to send you the medal of the Men of the 10th of August ; I am pleased to render this homage to the Incorruptible Robespierre.

“ COULOMBEAU,
“ Secretary-Recorder.

“ To the Citizen Robespierre senior.”

Is this homage offered to fear and cowardice ? Do they beg the man who hid himself to accept the formidable position of Judge in the court on the 10th of August ? If he refuses, it is because he knows that he cannot be “ the Judge of those of whom he has been the adversary.” He explains this openly the very day that his short letter to Manuel, the Attorney for the Commune, is misinterpreted :

“ SIR,

“ I have the honour to inform you that I cannot accept the office of Judge of the court destined to give sentence on the conspirators.

“ ROBESPIERRE.”

Having refused the office of Judge, he remained a journalist. In September, 1792, he

published the "Letters of Maximilien Robespierre, Member of the National Convention of France, to his Constituents." He drew them up until the month of March, 1793, the moment when all his time was taken up with the Convention and the Committee for the Public Safety, when the prohibition against the Royalists of the interior and the emigrated nobles on the frontier demanded the organization of the salutary Terror, based on the entire living forces of the nation. Without any distractions he gave himself up to it entirely, and came out of it with clean hands. It is his glory that he had done his duty and died poor. "He is afraid of money," Danton said of him. Yes, afraid of money, the fruit of treachery, the wages of compromise. Afraid—yes, and sometimes he had a contempt for it. And contempt for Tallien, when he heard of his jobbing at Bordeaux; contempt for Fouché, who will leave fourteen millions and the princely property of Ferrières; contempt for Barras, the woman's man, the Lord of the Manor of Grosbois; contempt for all those whose hands he knew to be stained with blood and robbery. And who knows if that was not the reason why he left Danton, whom nevertheless he loved so tenderly? Who knows if the wretched Chabot was not condemned for having

allowed himself to be bribed ? He does not believe in the repentance of the corrupt. Incorruptible himself, he hates corruption. "He was no pilferer," says Baudot. He was seen the day after Thermidor emptying his drawers. But let us return to the Duplays.

V

ROBESPIERRE AT HOME

THEIR house in the Rue Saint-Honoré is large and comfortable. They occupy all the ground-floor looking on the yard. It is entered by a large carriage entrance, flanked on the left by a restaurant, and on the right by a jeweller's shop. This jeweller, named Rouilly, is the man who, on August 10, 1810, became the proprietor of the whole house. To the left, on passing through the arch which made the passage of the carriage entrance, was a large staircase communicating with the rooms on the first-floor, looking on the street. These are the rooms that Charlotte and Augustin occupied in 1792, when they arrived from Arras. Destroyed in 1816, it is quite impossible to reconstruct them in all details. It is not the same with the rest of the house, which has remained intact, and gives up to-day the secret of the private life of its tenants during the Terror.

Near the staircase is a coach-house, then Duplay's workshop beyond the large shed. In

the corner of this left wing, which takes up one side of the yard, is an interior staircase which gives access to the first-floor, on the left to the rooms of Maximilien, of Duplay's son, of the wooden-legged Simon ; on the right to the rooms of the Duplays and their daughters. In the courtyard facing the entrance is the dining-room, lighted by door and window, between which is a pump. This pump disappeared during the alterations which took place under the Empire. To the right of the dining-room, and opening on to the same yard by a door, stands the kitchen. Let us go into the dining-room. It is large, light, and square. There is a stove in the left-hand corner. There is a glass door in the further wall ; this leads to the drawing-room. The drawing-room leads to a little room which is lighted by a window which overlooks the gardens of the Convent of the Conception. To the right a French window opens on to a narrow strip of ground which makes a garden for the children. There Eléonore and her sisters planted flowers and looked after them. Above the wall which shuts the ground in, on the right, flowering lilacs wave in the spring breezes in the deserted convent garden. Let us return to the courtyard. On the right there is a little flower-bed facing the

Duplays' shed. The borders end at the side of a little shed where they keep old tools and wood. Then in the corner, always to the right, are the closets.

That is the ground-floor of the carpenter's house. Let us go to the first-floor by the little wooden staircase adjoining Duplay's workshop. To the left is a little room which leads to Robespierre's room. This room receives daylight through a low window above the big shed in the yard. The room of Duplay's son (it is a very small room, as Mme. Le Bas says) and Simon's room come next to Robespierre's. On the other side of the landing, on the right, is the Duplays' room, with two windows looking on the yard. You must go through this room to reach that occupied by Eléonore and Elizabeth (Victoire sleeps in the room over the kitchen). The girls' room is fairly large. At the further end was a recess, which is still there to-day. At the side of this recess was a little room with a window overlooking the children's small garden. To the right were two windows.

Such is this floor of the house.

The front part, we have seen, is reserved for the younger Robespierre and his sister. The Robespierres paid the Duplays yearly one thousand francs rent.

Maximilien's rooms were furnished ; Augustin's and Charlotte's were not.

Robespierre's room had a low ceiling, and was furnished very simply. A painting of the period, which seems in every detail singularly exact, shows us his narrow bed with the uprights ending in globes of painted wood. It had blue damask curtains with white flowers. Lamartine tells us that it was "striped blue and white serge." The widow Le Bas, more explicit, goes into detail, adding that these curtains were made out of one of Mme. Duplay's dresses. Near the window stood a "very modest bureau." The room was furnished besides with a chest of pigeonholes, made of deal, due to the attentions of the old Duplay, and containing Robespierre's books. There were also three rush chairs for the rare visitors admitted to the room, for Robespierre generally received people in the little room leading from the drawing-room on the ground-floor. Such was the poor, sad little room that Fleury said was a "more sumptuous apartment than one could have imagined, contrasting it with the remainder of the house." What did he know about it ? He never put a foot in the place. There, on that white wood table, in these bare and austere surroundings, in the silence of night or in the morning noise

of the planes and other tools of the carpenter-journeymen, were drawn up all those brilliant and electric speeches which thundered from the gallery of the National Convention.

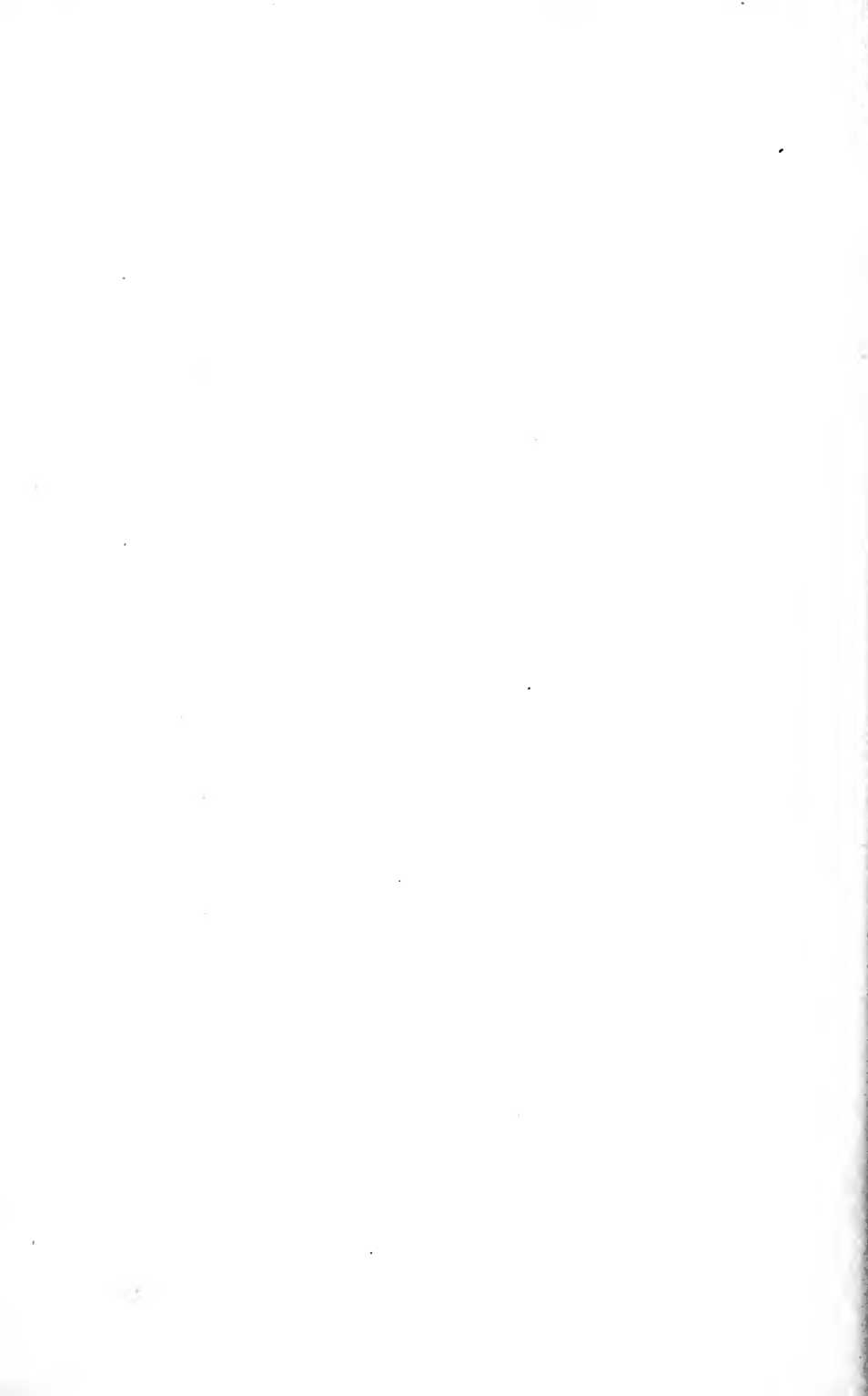
To-day the passer-by who, in this deserted spot transformed into a corn-chandler's, comes to call forth the phantom of the man of Thermidor, can imagine him there, bending over his table, in the shade of night, under the sad light of his failing lamp. He writes laboriously, scratches out, begins again, fills his overloaded pages held fast on the rack of style. The pages written in these nights are final—written for immortality, prophetic testaments left by his genius to a posterity still astonished at a destiny so great. It is there, in the midst of the witnesses of his upright poverty, that he receives Saint-Just on his return from his mission to the army.

Saint-Just! the atrocious young man of Michelet; the Barbaroux of the Terrorists, the Antinous of the Jacobins, the angel of death of Lamartine; Saint-Just of whom Nodier said, saluting the young man's heart: "He concerned himself with the children, loved the women, respected white hairs, honoured piety, and believed in respecting one's ancestors and in the cultivation of feeling." Between these two



SAINT-JUST

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men in this room, so terribly silent to-day, the fate of the republic was decided. Here, on the eve of the supreme conflict, they encouraged each other, and perhaps consoled each other. Here, between these four walls, in the silence of night, the tragic night-watch of Thermidor was kept. And this room is now a baker's shop !

VI

MAXIMILIEN'S DAY

SOMETIMES in the morning, coming to their work, the Duplays' men saw Maximilien's lamp burning at the window above the big shed. On these days he came down late. When his work had not been prolonged into dawn, he came down early, and shook hands with Duplay in the workshop, full of the songs of the journeymen and the noise of the hammers. Then he breakfasted, some say on a glass of water, which is very improbable; others, on fresh butter, fine fruit, pure milk, and fragrant coffee, and this sprawling in an armchair, which is not less improbable.

Ouvrard, who surprised Robespierre at breakfast one morning, says more simply: "I found him with two young girls breakfasting on coffee; he received me kindly, and invited me to have some coffee with him." After the meal came the toilet. "A hairdresser attended to him while he read the paper. All this was done so simply—too simply to believe it; so

people embroider the most fantastic stories on this subject. The most savoury of these stories is certainly that invented by Courchamps in his apocryphal memoirs, which have been attributed to the Marquise de Créquy. Nodier had already said that Mercier declared that Robespierre was "a lynx in ball-dress." Courchamps will show him to us as Dandy of the Terror, as an Incroyable. "He was already powdered," said he, "and stiffly frizzled; he wore a dressing-gown of chintz lined with blue taffetas silk; he had on silk stockings woven in pink and white; and gold or gilt and paste shoe-buckles. In the middle of the room was a rather pretty young girl, holding the cravat of the law-maker, a very ample piece of stiffly starched book-muslin, embroidered in three colours in silk. She put this fine cravat down on a table as soon as she saw me come in, and brought two trinkets to her master, and these were two gold watches, fitted immoderately long with chains."

Among all the extravagant portraits of Robespierre this one deserves to take the first place. We will take care not to lessen it by any remarks of ours.

Robespierre received his visitors in the little room adjoining the large drawing-room, and

opening on to the children's garden. This apartment, it seems, was decorated with his portraits. Probably the Duplays had collected them together there as a testimony of the public admiration for their guest.

However that may be, the presence of the portraits of the Incorruptible in ten different forms can hardly be contested. "This room," says Barbaroux, "was a pretty boudoir, in which his image was repeated in every shape and size. He was painted on the right-hand wall, and engraved on the left; his bust was on the further side, and his bas-relief facing you. Besides these there were half a dozen small engravings of Robespierre on the table." These details are confirmed by the future leader of the Theophilanthropists, and the statements of these two witnesses who did not know each other are equal to certainty. "The little room was specially consecrated to him. His bust was enshrined there with various decorations, verses, and mottoes." And he again mentions the different portraits which decorated the drawing-room, "portraits in crayon, in water-colour."

What a strange thing! All these portraits of the Incorruptible seem to have disappeared with him. Robespierre had breakfast and dinner

with the entire Duplay family. He was very sober, and everyone recognizes his sobriety, only excepting Fréron. Baudot says that he was "very sober"; Buonarroti declares that "his soberness was extreme"—statements which Fréron disputes without any proof. "The use of wines and liqueurs, which he drank without moderation, had doubtless caused him to commit some indiscretion. The fear of letting out the secret of this made him give it up, and during the last months of his life he only drank water." Spiteful assertion of Fréron's pen! Fréron himself was bluntly called "a drunkard" by Barras. But Charlotte says: "He only drank wine and water." An anonymous writer is still more explicit: "His breakfast consisted of a little wine, some bread, and fruit. He it was who always said the grace before meals. Once, when the woman Duplay gave him to understand that her table would no longer be good enough for him, Robespierre took it very badly. At table he eats like his hosts, and also drinks their bad wine." "He only has one passion—that is, fruit. 'He is fond of fruit,' says Charlotte, 'but particularly of oranges.' Why? Because they helped to combat the bile which suffocated him," says Fréron. "So they were always attentive to

place before him at dessert (at all seasons of the year) a pyramid of oranges, which Robespierre ate with avidity. He was insatiable, and no one else dared to touch that fruit. Doubtless the acidity dissipated the bilious humours of Robespierre, and made their circulation easier. It was easy to pick out the place which he occupied at the table by the pieces of orange skin which covered his plate. They say that he made fun of himself as he ate them." A cup of coffee invariably followed the dessert. After the meal, if the weather was bad, or if Maximilien did not go to the Committee of Public Safety or to the Jacobin Club, they went to the drawing-room.

VII

THE EVENING AT HOME

THE drawing-room is simple. The furniture is of mahogany, covered with red Utrecht velvet. The lamps are lit, and one by one the habitual guests arrive. When Robespierre first lived with the Duplays, Lameth and Pétion were often seen, but civic discord kept these citizens away from the *salon* of the Rue Saint-Honoré. Fouché went there when he knew he would meet Charlotte Robespierre, for Fouché wished to become Maximilien's brother-in-law. One can guess why. Under the safeguard of this blood relationship, he thought he would be able to find shelter from the justice which his robberies and blind cruelty deserved. Camille Desmoulins and his young wife came also, but that was before the *Vieux Cordelier*.

On these evenings, from Germinal to Thermidor of the year II., Saint-Just, Buonarroti, David, Couthon, and Le Bas, were no longer seen sitting in the warm light of the homely

lamps. The daughters and their mother worked some piece of tapestry, and Duplay rested in his arm-chair after the fatigues of the day. The men talked. In the listening silence of the big sleeping house, grand heroic words spread their wings. Saint-Just, whom Courtois calls "a thoughtless young man of twenty-six, having hardly got rid of the dust of his school, swollen with a little learning, the clumsy copier of antiquity"—Saint-Just, beautiful in all the grandeur of his coming execution, cries aloud for the Sparta, the Lacedæmonia, of his dreams.

When Le Bas speaks—about the victories of the Rhine and of the North—Elizabeth smiles lovingly at these prodigies of valour revived again. The gentle voice of Couthon, of that "wretched fellow with no legs whom Nature had forced to pass his life on a chair or in a bed"—Couthon, who to kindness had joined the strength of an implacable justice—speaks of Peace approaching with light green branches in her hand.

But all that is the present, the to-day which presses hearts in a vice, makes them tremble when, in the street outside the carriage entrance, a harsh voice, out of tune, cries through the peaceful silence of the evening the "Report

for the Sans-Culottes of the French Republic, by the very high, very puissant, and very expeditious Dame Guillotine. . . .” Then Buonarroti raises his voice, and strikes up one of the languishing songs of his country. He is an Italian, grand-nephew of Michael Angelo, a burning patriot, and he calls himself “the Apostle of Liberty” and “the enemy of the pillaging horde.” It is he whom the Convention charged to carry to Lyons the decree in favour of that Chalier who, with Jean-Paul Marat, was to be one of the martyrs of French liberty. There is a harpsichord in the Duplays’ *salon*. The broad tone of the instrument accompanies the fine voice of the handsome Italian. Later, in exile at Brussels, he will remember these happy hours, when, bare-headed and inspired, he sang the “Marseillaise” to his proscribed companions, with big tears rolling down his cheeks. Maximilien also takes part in the pleasures of the evening. He has Corneille, Racine, or Rousseau, within reach, and standing up he reads aloud fragments to his friends. What prophetic meaning sounded in the tender heroism of Racine when his voice declaimed it! And how his heart was touched in reading Jean-Jacques, whom he saw at the end of his gloomy life! Through them he expresses his profession of faith in his idea—and “he

made it felt so strongly when he read !” says Mme. Le Bas. When he ceased the vision of the future faded away ; his enthusiastic ardour fell, and he found himself again with his friends, in the peaceful room, in the gentle lamplight.

Who can say which of his speeches was written on nights like these, after leaving such friends ?

VIII

THE LOVER OF NATURE

MAXIMILIEN brought a dog back from the Artois. The dog's name was Brout, and his master took him for walks sometimes in the twilight, when it was fine. He generally went to the Champs Élysées, in the neighbourhood of the Marbœuf Gardens, which were much frequented at this period. Some little Savoyards played a native tune on the hurdy-gurdy; others danced to the music. Robespierre gave them his small change. "He was so kind." The little beggars called him "the kind gentleman." He was accompanied on these walks by the Duplay family. Then they took the less-frequented paths farther off. Prudhomme says that these outings generally ended in a dinner at an inn kept by a Swiss at the Pont-Tournant des Tuileries. Mme. Le Bas does not mention either the dinners or the games of chess played by Robespierre in the Café de la Régence, where they say he played for

heads and setting at liberty ; for it seems this man had all the refined cruelty of an accomplished monster. We must not grow weary of showing to what a degree the figure of the Incorruptible has been made up and disguised, and of what ridiculous adventures he has been made the cruel and easy hero.

In the course of this work we shall have occasion to point out some of these. The following episode is a splendid example. It is, naturally, once more an eyewitness who speaks, who knew the Café de la Régence under the Terror amazingly well. It was, the good man says, at the time when the guillotine was at its height. Hardly anyone went there, because no one had the heart to play ; and, besides, it was not gay to look out of the window and see cartloads of condemned people passing on their way through the Rue Saint-Honoré. It seems this sight did not affect M. Robespierre, who was one of the few who still came sometimes to play a game. He was not a very good player, but he made even the best players so nervous, when they played with him, that they always lost. One evening, when, according to his usual custom, he was waiting for an opponent—for no one was ever anxious to take the empty place facing him—a very young man, quite a

pretty boy, came into the café, and took his seat at the table. Without speaking, he moved his first piece. M. de Robespierre did likewise, and the game began. The young man won. Revenge was asked and granted, and they played a second game, and the young man was again the winner.

"Very well," said the loser, biting his fingers. "But what was the stake?"

"A man's head. I have won it; give it to me quickly. The executioner would have had him to-morrow."

He drew from his pocket a sheet of paper, on which was written the order to release the young Comte de R——, imprisoned in the Conciergerie. The signature only was wanting. Robespierre, whose nails were blood-stained, signed the paper and gave it back.

"But who are you?"

"I am a woman, the betrothed of the young Count. Thank you. Good-bye."

And there you are! Does that not seem to have been taken from the annals of the Restoration? And it is according to testimony of this description that M. Sardou and others wrote the history of the Terror—and of the Incorruptible.

Robespierre loved the country and Nature

because he was the disciple of Jean-Jacques ; he loved it still more because, in the revolutionary storm from which he so seldom escaped, Nature seemed to him the last refuge of his burdened heart.

“ We offered to you,” said Saint-Just, “ the luxury of a hut and a fertile field cultivated by your own hands ; we offered to the people the happiness of freedom and peace, and the calm enjoyment of the fruits of the Revolution, with its customs and the return to Nature.” But long before him Maximilien had boasted of the “ sweet emotion which is given by a glimpse of those enchanting landscapes, where Nature seems prodigal of her charms, and penetrates the soul with the feeling of her touching beauty.” And was he not animated by the same feelings at the feast of 20 Prairial ? “ O Nature, how sublime and delicious is thy power ! ”

Rousseau had directed his life ; his tenderness as a young man bears the reflection of this direction, and his religious beliefs testify to it. Was not Rousseau the first to blend religion with love ? What does Julie say after her sorrowful rupture with Saint-Preux, when the marriage with Wolmar spreads its pomps about her—what does she say to God ? “ I will be chaste, because that is the virtue on which all

others rest." Is not that the rule of life which Robespierre followed? And Julie says to that "Being who upholds or destroys": "I desire everything which tends to the order of Nature that Thou hast established, and to the rules of reason which I have of Thee." Was not the Feast of the Supreme Being a reaction against immorality? Was it not a conservative testimony that France rendered to the eyes of Europe? Does not the spirituality of this manifestation protest against that democratic mob which, in the "Considerations on the Government of Poland," Jean-Jacques fears on account of the alterations in the manner of representation? It is certainly the family and its moral tradition that the Incorruptible wishes to perpetuate throughout the shock and revolutionary overthrow, asserting always the spirit of order and logic, and the moral ideal which he had followed since he entered into political life. It was by the Feast of the Supreme Being that he protested against the unreasonable parade of the Feast of Reason, and it was to Rousseau that he appealed in his speech of 18 Floréal. "He attacked tyranny freely; he spoke enthusiastically of the Divinity; his strong, upright eloquence painted with flame-coloured strokes the charms of virtue. He defended the

consoling dogmas which Reason gives to the human heart for support. The purity of his doctrine, drawn from Nature and from a profound hatred of vice, as much as his invincible contempt for those intriguing sophists who usurped the name of philosophers, drew upon him the hatred and the persecution of his rivals and false friends." So the filiation between the Geneva philosopher and Robespierre was clearly established in that "system of civic religion according to Jean-Jacques Rousseau." If "Émile" and the "Contrat Social" play a part in the civil vocation of Maximilien, what part does "Julie" not play in the passionate melancholy of his sentimental life! And what memories must have weighed upon him of that visit which he, as a trembling young man, made to Ermenonville, to the home of the master of his youth—to the educator of his riper age!

And this is the pilgrimage which we make in our turn. We accomplish it in the depth of Frimaire to identify the landscape with the soul of the lawyer of Arras. Twilight hangs round the bare, rain-beaten branches. Soft mud clings to the heels in the paths along the hills. Ah! how far away is the Floréal of year II., when the Jacobin came here to dream about the civic Pentecost! The green garlands

of spring were then hanging lightly on the hills of Audilly ; a young and new strength forced the field plants to spring from the damp ditches ; and later on Maximilien will press his bouquet to his heart amid the acclamations and triumphant songs and sounding trumpets and peaceful booming of cannon at the feast of that republican Sabbath-day, 20 Prairial.

To-day there is only mud ; to-day there is only biting wind ; to-day there is rain—sad rain. But one day Maximilien followed these paths through the quagmire in the twilight, as we follow them. What a world of thought on his bent shoulders ! What a depth of fear in his beating heart ! At last he was going to see the man, the prophet, who had given the “ Contrat Social ” to the world at that moment when, from the mists of futurity, French liberty arose. It was the fatherly lover of Julie who was to appear to him, sad and wretched, moaning and sublime, in the sadness of the rustic woodland house. Julie ! Julie ! Did not Maximilien in the plains of Artois often take consolation from this dear and childish remembrance ?

He comes here, his memory full of that lady-love “ clothed with all the perfections ” with which Jean-Jacques himself has ornamented

“the idol of his heart.” The road is long in that icy twilight, and the wind fills the skirts of his well-worn, shiny green coat, and the cloth is thin and old on the shoulders of the poor young man. We follow Robespierre here ; we really see him, bent and silent, taking the road which leads to the Hermitage. It is already dark, and in this solitude the gleam from a low window makes, as it were, a hole in the darkness. He stops, and then his step is slower. The master is bending over the table. Around his wide and lofty brow, wrinkled by a sad and passionate life, fall the silvered locks of hair. The goose-quill is dipped nervously in the leaden inkstand, and the yellow light of the candle falls on a sheet of paper, which is rustled by a heavy and impatient hand. Poor and indifferent dwelling where the lonely Genevese is still awake ! Grey ashes fill the dead hearth. The clock in its narrow case has stopped, and the black hands point on the tarnished face to some old forgotten, far-away hour.

Maximilien de Robespierre stops before the low window with heavy heart and trembling hands, and looks on the pathetic sight. Jean-Jacques is working there in the cold—in silence and alone. Thérèse Levasseur has left that sad dwelling to find voluptuous pleasure in the

arms of the groom Johnson. The old man so deceived is there, as if fate had brought Maximilien to the Hermitage at the hour of his deepest desolation—so that he should appear to the eyes of his fervent and unknown disciple wrapped in the majesty which marks the *lonely man*. What a tremendous and tragic meeting in this far-off village, when the man with the finger of death already upon him welcomes the unknown poet who shall mount later on to glory by way of the scaffold of Thermidor !

On the threshold Maximilien de Robespierre broke down. To see the master who had been the god of his youth alone like that, and wretched, and forsaken, and fallen ! And behind that sorry door, shaken by the wind, the young man sobs silently in the darkness, in the rain and mud. “ Lord, I am not worthy to enter Thy house ; speak but the word, and my soul shall live.” The Divine word heals the troubled heart on those plains of Artois. Was not Rousseau for him the bread on which his soul was nourished, the flame which illumined his mind ? In the bad weather of a December storm the majesty of his god appeared to him ; and he knows this god to be a man, blasphemed, denied, insulted, exiled in this Hermitage hidden among the forests full of the noises of night. These sobs

find an echo in the heart of him who is writing the last pages of "*Rêveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire*." He rises, pushes open the door, and sees kneeling on the threshold the disciple whom fate leads towards him at his last hour. "Speak but the word, and my soul shall be healed." The page begun lies there by the side of the pen, and the ink is drying. Maximilien de Robespierre sits on the stool by the side of the deserted hearth. That wonderful moment, hoped for so ardently, and waited for so patiently in the cold little room in the Rue des Rats-Porteurs at Arras—that moment when the pantheistic genius of Jean-Jacques Rousseau is to decide on the civic future of the sentimental lover of Julie—that moment is here !

What words, perhaps lost to futurity, were spoken by these two men in that solitary house ! From the lips of Rousseau they fell, wonderful germs of life and of truth, into the soul of Maximilien, and his silence placed upon them the heavy stone of oblivion. Words unknown to us, holy words for eternity, a great and precious treasure !

These words decided his fate. It was like a secret and unknown consecration which promised immortality to Maximilien. This invisible

crown only falls from his brow on that heavy red evening of Thermidor.

The Jacobin soul became conscious in that country house beaten by the wind and the rain. And that is what we sought for here in the sad inn. The house is no longer there, the ruins of it carried away by the storms of time. The little old dungeon is hidden under bare trees, such as Maximilien saw it that evening of his melancholy pilgrimage.

O places bared by Frimaire, he will keep your glorious memory for ever, even at the time when his civil triumph makes his heart sad, and his Spanish and Flemish blood flies to his brain. Meanwhile, with broken heart, he will come back to you, ye trees of Montmorency and green glades of springtime, fields of soft plains, for a stone will bear witness "in the middle of a marsh," after they have buried him—like a dog—that "Here reposes the Man of Nature and Truth."

And Maximilien's tears will consecrate this stone, and make it worthy of the Pantheon, where they will take him in the glory of funeral pomp and triumph next Vendémiaire.

IX

ALL ABOUT HER

THE pale face of Eléonore passes over the stormy background of Maximilien's life—that silent and resigned Ophelia, wrapped in mystery and melancholy. She was the eldest of Duplay's four daughters. Was she beautiful? There was a pastel portrait of her in an exhibition in 1889. It showed a regular, calm face, with an expression of sad, overwrought sweetness. Nothing there pointed to the ardent young, enthusiastic girl, but, again, nothing there justified the severe judgment which a writer has given, speaking of "her thin lip, her bluey-green eye, over which a viper's gleam passes at times." A viper's gleam? Where did he see it? On that cold and faded canvas? No, certainly not, for all that portrait shows is the picture of a little middle-class girl with a certain grace and quiet charm. And as such was she able to please Robespierre? And if she did please him, what reason, what proofs,

are there in favour of the accusations brought against her? Was she his mistress, or simply his betrothed? Let us look at her accusers, and let us judge them by themselves. In the first place is the anonymous German who in 1794 drew that astonishing portrait of Robespierre of which we have already spoken. He is to be suspected of irony; but that is not the only quarter in which he errs. What does he write? "In his household arrangements simplicity is the order of the day; he has only the carpenter's family about him, the family in which he has lived since he came to Paris. On the same floor, and just opposite his room, lives a young girl. They say that she had intimate relations with the Incorruptible. And this may seem very probable to the eyes of people who easily allow themselves to conjecture. Robespierre never spoke about her, but, truly, one cannot infer anything important from his silence."

Let us refute the thing as it stands, without hesitation. The reader knows that Robespierre did not live with the Duplays when he arrived in Paris in 1789, but only from July, 1791. That is only a trifle. "On the same floor, opposite his room, lives a young girl." Let us look at the plans of the Duplays' house which

we can produce, and what shall we find opposite Robespierre's room? The Duplays' room! And you must go through the room in which the mother and father sleep to get to Eléonore's room! Would you believe it! An unexpected defender arises in the person of Sardou, who in our days agreed with the libeller Montjoye in his opinion of the Incorruptible. And Sardou writes: "This simple detail is sufficient to explain the nature of the relations existing between Robespierre and her who has been called alternately his mistress and his betrothed. The position of the rooms gives us a great argument in favour of the purity of Robespierre's manners."

We have just spoken of Montjoye. Naturally he is among the accusers. "Everyone knows," he says with assurance, "that he lived with his hostess as with a wife." And as that seems to him quite meaningless, he hastens to add: "This liaison did not hinder him from turning to prostitutes, or from bringing each of his orgies to an end by a nocturnal debauch." And as if the word of this base chatterer could not be doubted, M. Thiers repeated after him that Robespierre had relations with Eléonore which have been quite secret. If these relations were secret, how did he hear of them?

That is one of the smallest secrets of the courageous compiler. As for Vilate, who here follows Montjoye, he says with assurance: "The daughter of his host passed for his wife, and had a certain influence over him." But this influence does not prove anything. One does not intend to discuss these assertions for a single moment by the study, even cursory, of his character. He is a guest at the Duplays', and by making the eldest daughter his mistress he betrays confidence, prostitutes friendship, makes ducks and drakes of all feelings of justice, honour, and respect. But these feelings are his political feelings, they are even his rule of life. "Morality is the only foundation of civil society," he said on 18 Floréal. He also appeals to morals on 18 Thermidor. Always morality, everywhere morality, except with himself! He is, then, a hypocrite, a comedian to be distrusted! Alas! he gave a striking denial to this on 10 Thermidor! No, if anyone ever had the right to speak of morality and to propose it for a rule of public and private conduct, he was the man. "There was no question of giving him a mistress," says Michelet. And he does not call to any contemporary witness to strengthen his assertion. Why? Because, in spite of his rough and practised hatred for the Incorruptible,

he would rather judge him by his words, by his speeches, instead of condemning him by the slanders of the men of Thermidor.

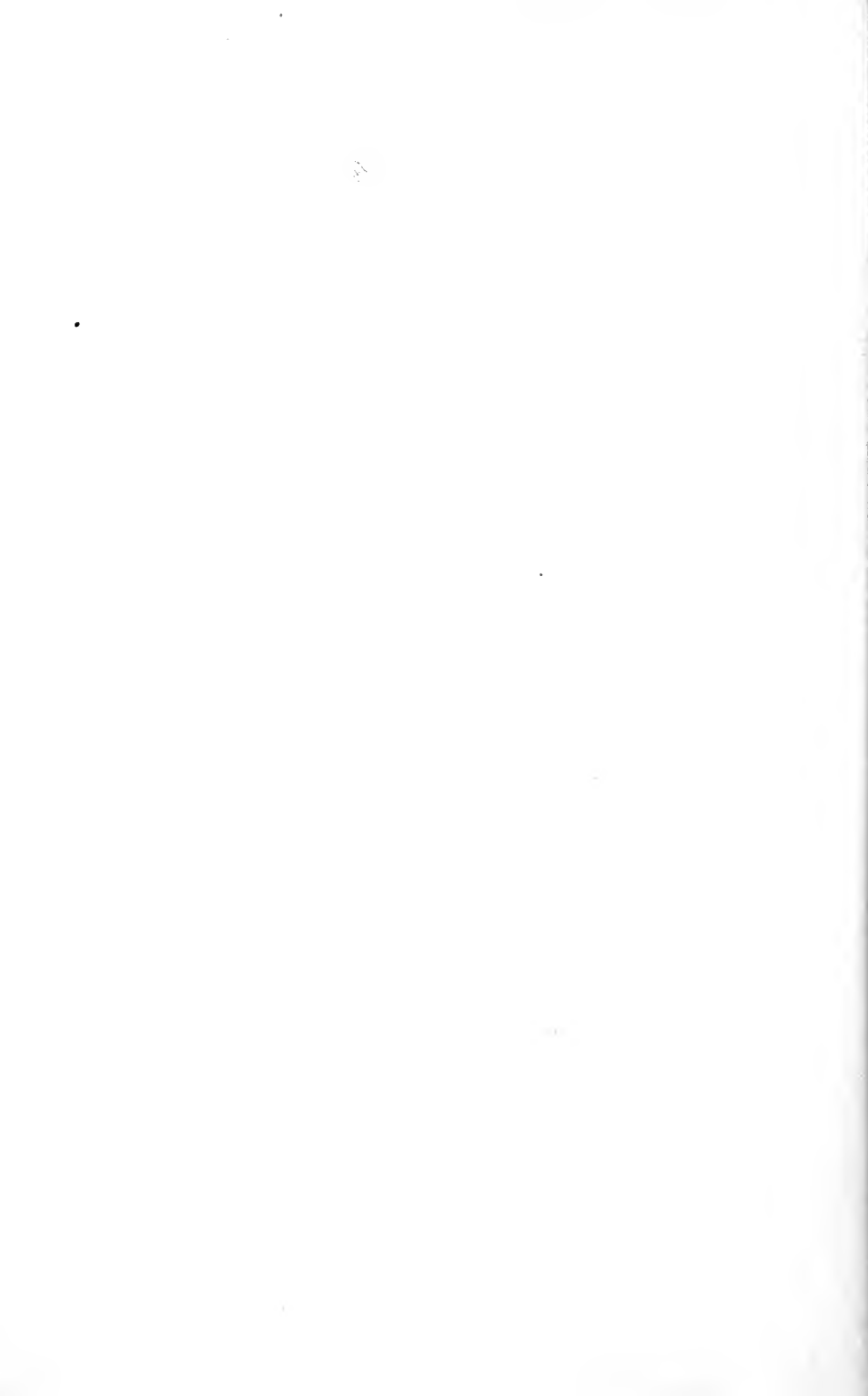
It will be seen that it is difficult to sustain this point, and to continue to throw into Robespierre's arms this Eléonore, whose admiration for Maximilien, according to Barras, Danton joked about, calling her Cornélie Copeau. Then Eléonore must be left out of this almost monkish life, "without familiarity, without toleration, and without pleasure." Is it necessary, because contemporary baseness and meanness cannot understand that life, with its grand sacrifice to an ideal—is it necessary, because this uprightness and virtue seem ridiculous to-day, to make Robespierre an unprecedented gallant or a debauched hypocrite? Barras will play this part sufficiently well on the morrow of 10 Thermidor, and the Terror had enough of that Don Juan.

And then? It only remains to face the supposition of Eléonore as his betrothed. Here witnesses more conclusive in proof come to us with their guarantees. "My eldest sister was affianced to Robespierre." This assertion seems irrefutable. There is no doubt that the Duplays cherished with pleasure the plan of uniting Eléonore to Maximilien. Elizabeth had married



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Le Bas ; there was nothing to prevent the eldest daughter from becoming the wife of the citizen Robespierre. Charlotte tells us that it was Eléonore's only ambition. M. Lenôtre has embroidered many patterns on this theme, which bear witness to his fertile imagination. Unhappily for writers of this kind, imagination is only required to make history. According to him, Eléonore desired to become the Queen of France. Quite simply. "Poor Eléonore Duplay dreamed that she saw herself in the bed of Queens." And as if he were afraid of not having laid sufficient stress on this, he repeats : "In this recess she slept, with the words of her betrothed passing through her mind, and dreaming that she was the Queen of France." And why did Eléonore dream like this ? Because she felt "the proud desire to believe herself chosen by a man whose name alone made France tremble—something of the infinite joy of a tamer with a wild animal." Who among us could have imagined such a Machiavellian pride in the poor and modest young girl, almost unknown ?

M. Lenôtre also says that she did not love Robespierre. Who told him so ? Also he says that "she fell into Robespierre's arms because it was her fate" ! Do all women love the men

they meet on their way through life ? It may be good pathology, but it is very bad history.

But how did Robespierre look upon the Duplays' project ? Did he consent to the short engagement so brutally ended ? Baudot says that "he had reason to believe that he was thinking of marrying."

He does not say what reason. As for believing Eléonore to be Robespierre's mistress, the idea is "quite wrong." But he does not believe that Robespierre is in love with his betrothed. "He paid attentions, but was not in love !" Someone has lately found a specious reason for this : Robespierre was not in love with Eléonore because she was a "virago who did not excite love." By what portraits has she been judged ?

Charlotte Robespierre has explained and given her reasons, which, in spite of her animosity against Mme. Duplay, we are almost tempted to accept : "Burdened as he was with business and work, entirely taken up with his duties as a member of the Committee of Public Safety, could my eldest brother give his attention to love and marriage ? Was there room in his heart for such frivolity, when his heart was quite full of love for his country, when all his feelings were concentrated in a single sentiment, in a single thought—the happiness of the people ;

when, constantly in conflict with the enemies of the Revolution, and incessantly assailed by personal enemies, his life was one perpetual fight? No, my brother neither could nor did amuse himself with Eléonore Duplay, and I must add that this would not have agreed at all with his character. Besides, I can call to witness, he told me twenty times that he felt nothing for Eléonore; the attacks and importunities of her family were rather disgusting to him, and not conducive to affection. The Duplays have been able to say what they pleased, but that is the exact truth. You can judge if he was disposed to marry the eldest daughter of Mme. Duplay by some words I heard him say to Augustin, 'You ought to marry Eléonore.' 'Faith, no!' answered my young brother." Perhaps the truth is in these lines.

In fact, we cannot see anywhere that Robespierre gave Eléonore any preference over her sisters. When he took Mme. Duplay to the Theatre of the Republic, to admire the Roman heroism of the verse of Corneille and Racine, he took Eléonore—yes, but he also took her sisters. Exactly the same with the walks. All the family went. There were no attentions which said, This is the chosen one! He was kind to her; in the same way he was kind to her

sisters. And truly, as Charlotte says, in those terrible years 1793 and 1794 had he any room in his heart for a wife or any woman? His work, his speeches, his deeds in the Committee of Public Safety, must answer for him. He is entirely occupied by his task.

Six weeks before his death he seems to have relaxed a little. Did he abdicate, did he give up? No, for it was then, in his poor lonely room, that he drew up his testament of faith and hope; it was then that he wrote the last pages of his rugged, blazing speeches which make him equal to the great masters of oratory. As he himself said, he cut himself off from his work in order to finish it. And that is how he allowed his enemies—the most corrupt debauchees, the rabble of sharpers who exploited the Terror and lived on it—to mark the hour of his fall. And while he felt these storms rising in the heavens of Thermidor, should he be dreaming of woman? No; and if for thirty-eight years Eléonore mourned for him, it is for her friend and not for her lover. If she was betrothed, it was only as a widow; and if she loved him at last with a great tenderness, it is because Robespierre rises in history amid hatred or silence.

BOOK III

THE SARDANAPALUS OF THE TERROR

I

THE DEVOTEES OF THE INCORRUPTIBLE

ROBESPIERRE'S influence over women was enormous. Never was a man so surrounded by devotees as this man, who had apparently done away with love—at least, as far as he himself was concerned. On those days when he was speaking at the Convention the galleries were full, and the feminine element predominated. It was just the same when Maximilien answered Louvet—that Louvet who had risen to exclaim: "Robespierre, I accuse you!" Such a storm of feminine applause greeted the peroration of Maximilien's speech that Rabaud Saint-Étienne said in leaving the meeting:

"What a man this Robespierre is, with all his women! He is a priest who wishes to be god."

That was no chance word. Rabaud Saint-Étienne was only expressing an idea then almost universal—the idea of Robespierre as lay pope and pontiff, which in our days does not agree with the principle of 18 Floréal, which recognized

at Robespierre's instigation the existence of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. And the thing went back further than that, for Condorcet, two years previously, had already said: "One asks why there are so many women in Robespierre's train—at his house, in the gallery of the Jacobin Club, at the Cordeliers, in the Convention? It is because the Revolution is using them for party purposes. He is a priest with his devotees, but it is evident that all his power lies in the distaff." These words will wound the Incorruptible, and he will remember them when he tells Condorcet that he was formerly a great geometrician in the opinion of literary men, and a great literary man according to the statement of geometricians. And he adds: "Afterwards a shy conspirator despised by all factions, working unceasingly to hide it by the treacherous rubbish of his mercenary rhapsodies." But did Condorcet exaggerate? Doubtless not, since the same thought inspires—January, 1793, two months later—this couplet in the *Chansonner Patriotique*, which is sung to the tune of the "Bourgeois de Chartres":

"Followed by his devotees,
And surrounded by his court,
The god of the Sans-Culottes,
Robespierre, arrives.

‘ I denounce you all ! ’ cries the pallid orator ;

‘ Jesus ! these are intriguers ;

They lavish incense on thee which is due to me alone ! ’ ”

And they call these women his *jupons gras* ! What kind of influence does he exercise over them ? Is it the “ feeling which is devotion rather than love ” ? It is, we believe, a moral ascendancy due to the strictness of his habits, of his principles, an attraction which his inflexibility, which makes no compromises, merits. All women come to this man, who goes to no woman, firstly, because of the eternal contradiction of the feminine mind, and then because Robespierre’s doctrine, reaching all who are oppressed—and do not women always look upon themselves as in perpetual slavery ?—satisfies, as has been said with precision, “ their weakness and their need of protection.” It is very evident that this “ man who knows how to appreciate pretty women,” as M. Welschinger rather childishly calls him, receives but few love-letters—he does receive some, however, as we shall see—and his correspondence with women is above all political. They, indeed, look upon him as a man of principles, of ideas, and of politics. And it is better than that, for his policy is their policy. The letters addressed to him are curious proofs of this.

This is from Olympe de Gouges : “ I propose that you should take a bath with me in the Seine ; but in order to wash away entirely the stains with which you have covered yourself since the 10th [of August], we will fasten balls—size 16 and 24—to our feet, and we will throw ourselves together in the waves.”

Is this incoherent ? No, just political neuroticism—slightly more exaggerated than in other cases, that is all.

Let us now look at some of Robespierre’s feminine correspondence. It is doubly curious, firstly because it emanates from devotees, then because it is nearly always, as we have already said, exclusively political. This is anonymous :

“ TO CITIZEN MAXIMILIEN ROBESPIERRE,
REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE AT
PARIS.

“ Permit an old friend to address to you a faint and slight picture of the evils with which the fatherland is burdened. You advocate virtue. For six months we have been persecuted and governed by every vice. All sorts of seduction are employed to lead the people astray—contempt for virtuous men ; outrages against Nature, justice, reason, the Divinity ; the enticement of riches, thirst for the blood of brothers. If my letter reaches you, I shall look

upon it as a favour from Heaven. Our ills are very great, but our fate is in your hands. All virtuous minds implore you. The universal cry is, Deliverance or death !”

Toadyism, they say. But the letter is anonymous ! What does eulogy mean in that case ? The second letter is shorter, but the tone of it is the same. This one is signed, but does it seek any favour ? It simply repeats what the anonymous letters say :

“ Worthy representative of the people, what tremendous labour, what a rapid march to immortality ! History will never be able to paint perfectly so much virtue, talent, and courage. I give thanks to the Supreme Being, who has watched over your life.

“ S. V——.

“ 5 *Prairial, year II.*”

But these statements are obscure. There are others fallen from more illustrious pens, which later on turned against the first object of their admiration. Mme. Roland—how can we believe it ?—from 1791 was amongst these devotees, the number of which only went on increasing.

Here, again, the only question is of politics, but do they not borrow considerable authority from the signature ?

Robespierre exercised a rare influence over the passionate, sensitive character, and that is why these letters must not be neglected. Who would dream of denying their importance—above all, when one sees the dates at which they were written? The first finds Robespierre when he has only been in Paris for two years, and is still quite unknown.

Two years! That was enough to give him a supremacy which reached its zenith in the year II. And what did Manon write to him?

“ AT THE FARM OF LA PLÂTRIÈRE, IN THE PARISH
OF THEZÉE, DISTRICT OF VILLEFRANCHE,
DEPARTMENT OF RHÔNE-ET-LOIRE,

“ *September 27, 1791.*

“ In the bosom of the capital, home of so much passion, where your patriotism has just provided you with a career as difficult as it is honourable, you will not receive, Sir, without some interest a letter dated from the depth of the desert, written by a free hand, and which that feeling of esteem and pleasure, which good people experience in communicating with each other, addresses to you.

“ Even if I had only followed the course of the Revolution and the progress of the Legislative Body in the public papers, I should have distinguished the small number of courageous

men, ever faithful to their principles, and amongst these men him whose energy has never ceased to oppose the firmest resistance to the expectations and machinations of despotism and intrigue ; I should have devoted to the elect the attachment and gratitude of the friends of humanity for his generous counsel for the defence. But these feelings acquired a new strength when one observed more closely the depth of the intrigues and the horror of that corruption which despotism employs to subject and degrade mankind, to preserve and increase the stupidity of the people, to lead opinion astray, to seduce the weak, to frighten the masses, and to ruin all good citizens.

“ History only paints on a large scale the actions and consequences of tyranny, and this fearful picture more than suffices to render all arbitrary power odious ; but I can imagine nothing so hideous, so revolting, as its efforts, its trickery, and its atrocity, displayed in a hundred ways, to hold its ground in our Revolution.

“ No one who was born with a soul, and has kept it unstained, can have looked on Paris in these latter days without bemoaning the blindness of corrupt nations, and the abyss of evil from which it is so difficult to extricate them.

“ I have made a series of observations in this city, and the sad conclusion resembles that which one draws nearly always from the study of men—that the greater number of them are infinitely miserable, and this is caused by our social institutions ; that one ought to work for the good of the race, as the Divine Being works, for the charm of effecting it, the pleasure of being one’s self and of fulfilling one’s destiny and of enjoying one’s self-respect, but without expecting either gratitude or justice on the part of individuals ; lastly, that the few high minds which might be capable of great things are dispersed over the surface of the globe and ruled by circumstances, and can very seldom unite to act in concert.

“ I have found on the highway, as in Paris, the people deceived by their own ignorance, or by the devices of their enemies, scarcely knowing the state of things or judging it wrongly ; everywhere the mass is good, having a just mind because its interest is the interest of all ; it is always either led away or blind. Nowhere have I met people with whom I could talk openly in any useful way of our political situation ; I took care to leave copies of your speech in every place I visited ; they must have been found after I left, and have furnished an

excellent text for the meditations of some people.

“The small town where I live, and that in which I stayed for some days, Villafranca, has only patriots in words, who like the Revolution because it has destroyed what was above them, but who know nothing about the theory of a free government, and who have no idea of that sublime and delicious feeling which makes us see only brothers in our fellows, and who confuse universal benevolence with that burning love of liberty which alone is capable of assuring happiness to mankind. All these people bristle at the name of the Republic, and a King seems very essential to their existence.

“I kissed my children with delight; I swore with tears to forget politics, and only to study and feel Nature, and I hurried to the country.

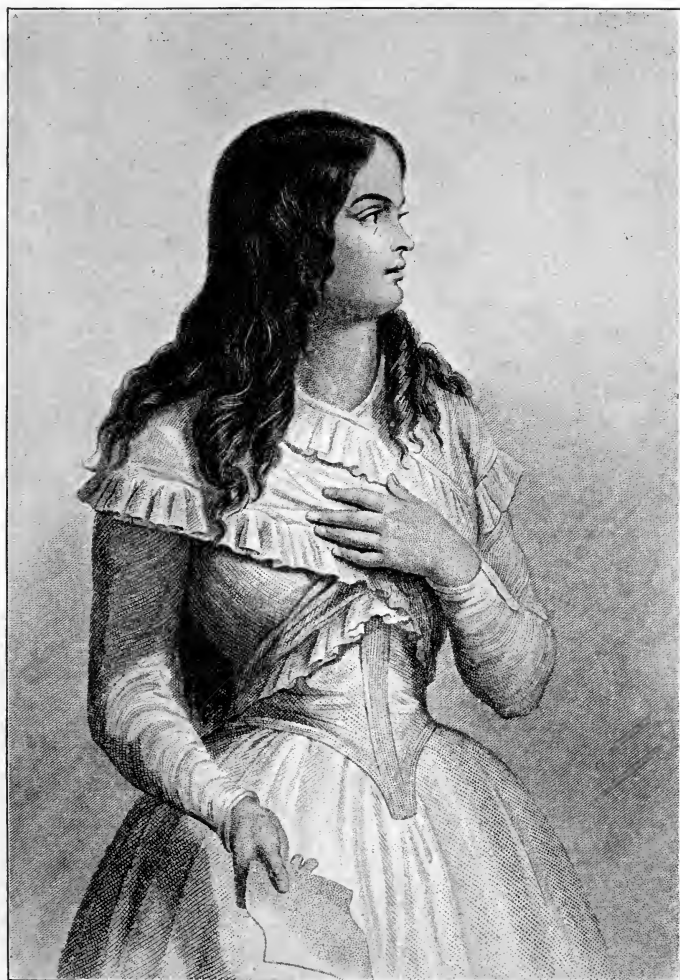
“An extraordinary drought had added all that it is possible to imagine to the barrenness of an ungrateful and stony soil, to the sad sight of a rustic estate which the eye of the master alone can revive, and this master has neglected it for six months. Harvest time demanded my presence and increased my solicitude; but country work brings with it peace and gaiety, and I should have enjoyed them without admixture

if I had not discovered that the slanders invented at Lyons to remove my husband from the Legislature had reached me in my retreat, and that men who only had cause to remember our devotion to the general welfare, and to theirs in particular, attributed our absence to the supposed arrest of M. Roland as a counter-revolutionary ; and lastly I heard ' *Les Aristocrates à la Lanterne !* ' sung at me.

" I have no fears about these absurd prejudices which have not gained over the majority ; besides, our presence alone, and the taking up again of this simple beneficial life to which we are accustomed, will soon make the smallest traces of them disappear. But how easy it is to bewilder the people, and to turn them against their real defenders !

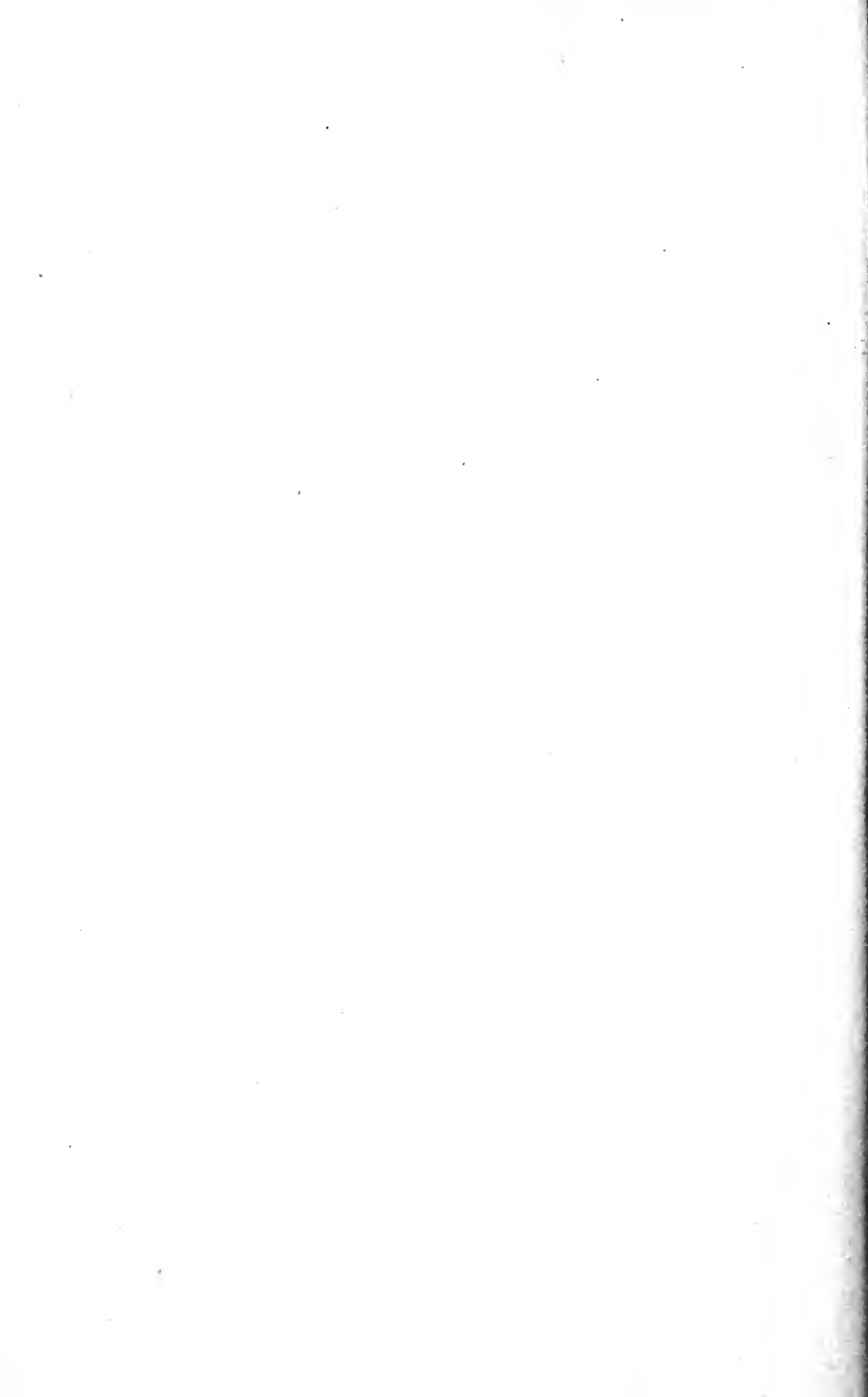
" As for Lyons, this city is devoted to the aristocracy ; the elections are detestable ; the deputies are only enemies of liberty, stock-jobbers of little or no reputation ; there is no talent, even indifferent ; the department is composed very much like the deputation in the Legislature. Some patriots have been driven to the district where they cannot do very much good nor prevent much evil.

" If the representative government must be judged by the little experience that we already



MADAME ROLAND

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have of it, we ought not to feel too happy. The mass of the people never deceives itself very much for long ; but one can buy electors, then administrators, and at last the representatives who sell the people. May we always be able, while estimating the vices which prejudiced and ambitious men have introduced into our Constitution, to feel more deeply that all that does away with perfect equality and real liberty tends necessarily to degrade and corrupt the race, and to keep happiness away.

“ You have done much, Sir, to demonstrate and spread these principles ; it is beautiful and consoling to be able to bear this testimony in a time when so many others do not yet know what career is reserved for them. There remains a great deal for you to do, that all parties may respond, and you are on a stage where your courage will not fail to find opportunities. From the depth of my retreat I shall hear with gladness the result of your success ; I rely also on your services for the success of justice, for the publication of truths which concern the general happiness is always a success for the good cause. If I had thought only of what I could tell you, I should have refrained from writing to you ; but without having anything to tell you, I had faith in the interest with which

you would receive news of two beings whose souls were made to feel for you, and who like to express to you an esteem which they grant to few, an attachment which they devote to those only who place above everything the glory of being just and the happiness of being sensitive. M. Roland has just returned, tired and saddened by the inconsistency and the frivolity of the Parisians. Together we are going to follow our rustic occupations interspersed with some office work, and to seek in the practice of private virtues an alleviation from public misfortunes, if it is reserved for us to be witnesses of what a treacherous Court and ambitious rogues can do. Accept as we offer them our sympathy and our wishes.

“ROLAND, *née* PHILIPON.”

Is this the kind of letter usually addressed to a friend or to someone indifferent? This example reveals the true ascendancy of Robespierre over the mind of her who was later on the Queen of the Gironde. But then she freed herself from his influence. Why? Because she knew herself to be at the head of a party. She imagined she was able, with her friends, to wield the power of the Jacobins to the benefit of the power of the Girondins. Her feverish

and tormented mind broke away from Maximilien's influence, and she traced passionately the wretched portrait which her memoirs have handed down to us. She wished to deny him before posterity, but will she deny him the praises of 1791 and 1792 ? And is this second letter less significant than the one just quoted ?

“ PARIS,

“ *August 25, 1792, in the Evening.*

“ I wished to see you, Sir, because, believing you to have an ardent love for liberty, an entire devotion to the public good, I found in entertaining you that pleasure and profit which good citizens experience in expressing their feelings and in explaining their opinions. The more you appear to me to differ on an interesting question from men whose judgment and uprightness I esteem, the more important it seems to me to draw together those who, having only one end in view, ought to agree together on the means of attaining to it. When the mind is pure, when all intentions are honest, and when the ruling passion is that of universal interest stript of all personal considerations and hidden ambition, you ought to end in agreeing on the manner in which public affairs must be treated.

“I have been troubled to see you, persuaded that no one, with any knowledge at all, who thought differently from you on the war question was a good citizen.

“I have not committed the same injustice towards you. I know excellent citizens who have opinions contrary to yours, and I have never found you to be esteemed the less for seeing things from a different point of view. I have bemoaned your prejudices, I have desired to avoid having prejudices myself, to learn the depth of your reasons ; you promised me to explain them to me ; you were to come to my house. You have avoided me, you have told me nothing, and in this interval you raise public opinion against those who do not think like you. I am too frank not to acknowledge to you that this course did not seem right to me.

“I am ignorant whom you look upon as *your mortal enemies*. I do not know them ; certainly I do not receive them in my house in *confidence*, for I only receive citizens whose uprightness is proved to me, and who have no enemies but those of the welfare of France.

“Recall to mind, Sir, what I explained to you the last time I had the honour to see you : *To uphold the Constitution, to have it carried out with popularity*—that is what really seems

to me to be the guiding compass of the citizen, no matter where he finds himself. That is the doctrine of the respected men I know, that is the end and aim of all their actions, and I look round me in vain to apply the term 'intriguer' which you use.

"Time will bring all things to light; the justice of time is slow but sure; it is the hope and consolation of well-meaning people. I shall expect from justice the confirmation or justification of my esteem for those who have it now. You, Sir, must consider that the justice of time must make your glory eternal or annihilate it for ever.

"Forgive me for expressing myself with so much austerity; it is due to the opinions that I hold, the sentiments which animate me, and the fact that I can never appear to be other than I am.

"ROLAND, *née* PHILIPON."

That was the first break. A year later poor Manon, in prison, began her invective against him, whom she accused of all the evils of the republic. Then she said "Nature has made him so timid," "his voice is vulgar," "he is jealous," and Girondin to the death, because that is her rôle and her glory,

she calls her anti-Jacobin hatred to witness that she had been, perhaps, the first of all the women of France to recognize in Maximilien the great Jacobin.

It can be easily understood to what degree Robespierre's influence over women extended. There are strange surprises, moreover, among which Charlotte Corday hesitating to accept him for her counsel is not the least. Whether they will or not, all are his devotees, and remain so, whatever they say, whatever they do.

Robespierre, naturally, was assailed by them. Whoever holds a particle of power is also exposed to the solicitations of those who speak by their elegance and beauty rather than by their right. "One of them writes that the French Revolution did not destroy the influence of women. The republican committees did not resist them any better than the boudoirs of the late Court. They were filled with skilful negotiators, who displayed the powers which their tender looks, sweet smiles, mad gaiety, and their graceful sallies, procured for them. These are the weapons which French women know how to wield better than the women of any other European country. Commissioners, agents, Ministers, could not resist, and I believe

that, taking everything into account, the feminine sex, on which constitutional deeds confer no right, exercises an almost despotic authority over the sovereign people." That was in the year II. In the year VIII. these customs had scarcely changed, since we see Fouché, Minister of the Police, give orders to his inspectors not to allow women in the Government offices under any pretext.

In this respect we can imagine ourselves living in the year II. or in the year VIII. It was only the Government departments which were besieged in this fashion. We know about Josephine Beauharnais' application to Vadier, the member of the Convention, and does not Vilate tell us that every morning Barère's ante-chamber was full of pretty women bearing petitions, on whom the Anacreon of the Guillotine lavished compliments? From that we are allowed to believe in the presence of such visitors at the Duplays' house.

We will imagine the conclusion that Robespierre's detractors have drawn from this. These women came to him imploring for human lives, but he is the tiger, the blood-drinker, and so he always refuses to listen. That is Fleury's story. His sister, Mme. de Sainville, went to Maximilien to ask him to set at liberty the actor arrested

for the "Paméla" affair. Useless to relate how Robespierre received her. There is an adventure almost similar in the memoirs of the Duchesse d'Abrantès. There we see Mme. de la Marlière begging for the life of her husband the General. "When she left, Robespierre said: 'That woman is pretty, you know—very pretty!' and his remarks were made in a tone which made you freeze and tremble at the same time." You understand, when Mme. de la Marlière had left! Mme. d'Abrantès, then, listened at keyholes? But Maximilien did not always receive these petitioners.

"Mme. de Rache has returned to Paris," Le Bas, the member of the Convention, writes to his father about one of these. "She has been several times to Robespierre endeavouring in vain to interest him in cutting off the entail which troubles her; she found no way of speaking to him." We can imagine that Mme. de Rache was not alone in this. This scorn itself became an argument against Robespierre. If he does not take advantage of these petitioners in his house, it is just hypocrisy to keep his reputation for uprightness and austerity intact. That is why they make him run after the young girls in the city. Our anonymous German makes skilful insinuations: "He goes home extra-

ordinarily late," he writes; "he often works till midnight at the Committee of Public Safety; but if he is not at the Committee, he nevertheless does not go home till midnight. Where is he all this time? No one knows." The kind German is evidently mistaken; Montjoye knows where Robespierre is: he is in a brothel—nothing else—he who replied to Camille Desmoulins' invitation to supper: "I stay at home. Light champagne is the poison of Liberty." But, then, Montjoye is so certain. "He gave expensive feasts, sometimes at Saint-Cloud, sometimes at Conflans, sometimes at Issy . . . he ended his days in orgies, at which the most expensive of dishes were served, and also the best wines." "And each of the orgies ended in some nocturnal debauch." How is it possible not to believe anyone so sure?

Then we go straight on to Fleury's stories, re-edited by M. Lenôtre with so much pleasure, and embellished by M. Victorien Sardou, and arrive at that drama in which we see Robespierre provided with a natural son. That is how I have the honour to write it. It even crosses the frontier, and we see Polish historians accusing the Incorruptible of the death of the Princess Rosalie Lubomirska, guilty of having withstood the advances of the tiger. It is

necessary to accuse Robespierre in order to pity her wretched fate ?

But the most amusing story was circulated by Talma's second wife, Charlotte Vanhove, of the Comédie-Française. We must leave it all the flavour of its naïve and bumptious ingenuity.

Robespierre came nearly every day to the theatre ; the young actress was not long in finding out that she was the object of this perseverance. She shuddered ; and, fearing the manifestations of such a fatal love, she sought means at least to postpone a declaration which she feared not to be able to prevent. She said she was ill, and did not go on the stage. But what was her horror when Talma told her what had happened in his case ! He had a very good tailor ; he was the only one who carried out perfectly the tragedian's instructions with regard to the little short coats in Polish fashion, trimmed with braid. Robespierre sent for the tailor in question, and told him in a few words to make him a coat. The tailor, thinking to add to his reputation for fashion, said, while measuring Robespierre, " Would the citizen like a coat cut *à la Talma* ? " At this name, Robespierre was seized by a nervous irritation, which showed itself in such a manner that the trembling tailor thought he saw a tiger ready to

seize him. "Talma ! Talma !" Robespierre repeated. "I do not mean that," the poor tailor cried, retiring ; and, without waiting to take the measurements, he flew through the door, and ran as fast as his legs would carry him to the Rue de la Victoire, to tell Talma of the scene he had just witnessed.

To tell the truth, no one has taken this story seriously. Everyone knows Robespierre's feelings for the Théâtre de la Nation—"that disgusting resort of the aristocracy," as he called it—and the men of Thermidor remembered his words in the day of vengeance. "Who would believe," exclaimed Courtois, "that to abolish the theatre was one of Robespierre's plans ?" What would he have said had he known the story of Charlotte Vanhove ? He would have drawn crushing arguments from it. But he did not, and for a very good reason. The tailor was silent ; Talma was silent ; the object of "so fatal a love" boasted about it—a little late, it is true. But she was a woman, and concerned herself but little to give probability to her story. She suffices to condemn her anecdote. The same with the other stories. If they sin, they sin in the basis—the basis belonging only to history ; the remainder must be left to the novel. Sensitive souls will always find satisfaction there.

These notes then, such as they are, throw a little light on Robespierre's devotees. Doubtless these petitioners are only devotees by necessity and want, but there are others more disinterested, and we have to draw their lost charms from obscurity. They show him as besieged as a Minister of the old régime, but disdaining the offers they may bring. That is precisely what his enemies reproached him with when he fell. It is true that they also added the grievance of coarseness and cruelty in his refusals. On this point what we have already said about the man and his ingrained politeness must answer. Was it no virtue, in those times of immorality, to have resisted, in the name of honesty and moral cleanliness, all those petitioners ready to yield or even to offer themselves?

And because he did not make mistresses of all these women, they call him "the Don Quixote of virtue." Would they have been better pleased if he had been the Don Juan?

II

ROBESPIERRE ENGAGED

ROBESPIERRE, austere, solitary, and chaste, was an enigma for those who drew him into the trap of Thermidor. Women's men like Barras, Barère, Tallien, did not understand the example of that private life which did not look upon itself as separate from public life, and which disdained to use the mask of a ready hypocrisy. There was something mysterious to them, and they looked for the solution in vain. At last someone found it : Robespierre disdained the citizen women because he was aiming higher. Higher ? At whom, then ? At Mme. Royale, the daughter of Louis XVI. And the gang of ruffians betrothed the Incorruptible to the Captive in the Temple ; and doing that, they solved the double riddle. We have seen the first ; the second was of greater importance. Robespierre, with designs on Mme. Royale, showed plainly the end to which he was

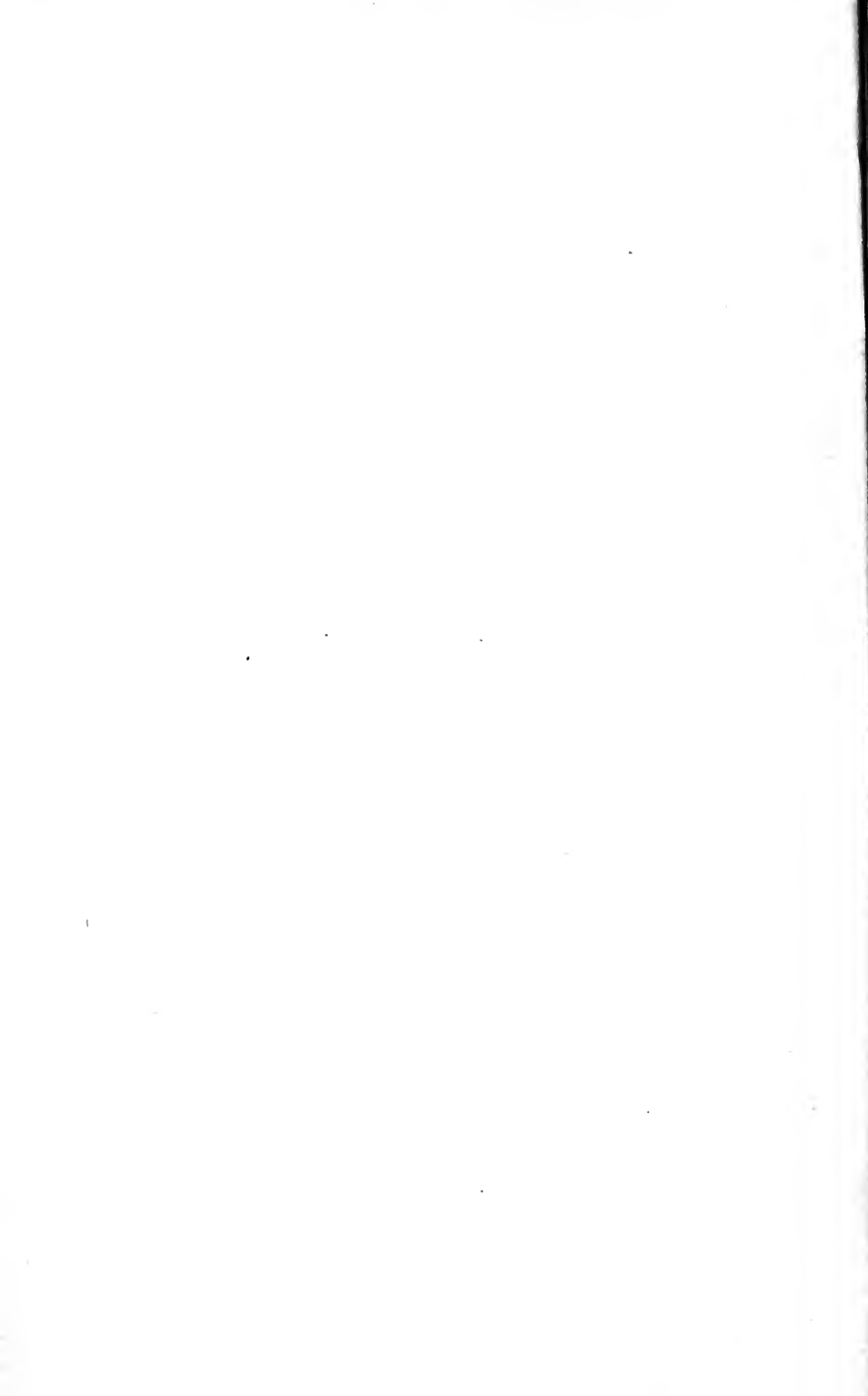
reaching—tyranny. He had overthrown the tyrant Capet to put himself in his place by marrying his daughter. What a simple calculation! What an ingenuous trick! Pretending to believe it themselves, they made others believe it. It became an article of faith, well established and proved: 9 Thermidor, then, only struck at him who aimed at tyranny, and aspired to attain to it by the most ingenious methods.

The reaction of Thermidor brought together, in this respect, a bundle of facts which were to bring forward evidence and prove the thing. In the tragic night soldiers went to the Temple to carry off the prisoners. "The rumour spread," says a pamphlet, "that, in order to give himself more splendour in the eyes of his future [*sic*] crowned colleagues, the tyrant was aspiring to the hand of the young Capet to marry her. Why, then, those efforts made during the night from 9 to 10 Thermidor to gain possession of the Temple? This marriage would be in his eyes a way of making himself recognized by the foreign Powers, if his satellites had it proclaimed here. This conjecture did not astonish those who understand ambitious men and the ways of Courts." In order to sustain this unexpected thesis, they leaned on the authority



BERTRAND BARÈRE

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of one of the supporters of the *coup d'état*. "Perhaps you would not believe it," said Barère to the National Convention, "on the desk of the Communal House, where the counter-revolutionary sittings were held, was a new seal, having for only impress a fleur-de-lis; and already, in the night, two individuals had already presented themselves at the Temple to demand the inmates."

And the same Barère asserts emphatically that Robespierre was thinking of marrying the daughter of Capet. He finds himself strangely contradicted: Barras himself qualifies his report "as equally cruel and false against Robespierre."

But this denial came only some years after 9 Thermidor, when Barras, with Vadier (who denied the story of the fleur-de-lis), Amar, Cambon, Billaud-Varenne, and several others, understood the crime committed on that day when the republic foundered. But in that moment it was desirable to bring Catilina to ruin, and any means were good enough for this. And was not the absurd accusation of tyranny the best means of all? To the same category belongs the statement made that same night, about the inscription on the leather bag with which Robespierre wiped the congealed

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blood from his jaw. And what was the inscription ?—

TO THE GREAT MONARCH
LECOURT,

PURVEYOR TO THE KING AND HIS TROOPS, RUE
SAINT-HONORÉ, NEAR RUE DE POULIES, PARIS.

To the great monarch ! Was not that a proof of Robespierre's criminal intentions ? They thought so ; better still, they said so. And, as with the other accusations, they believed it. Nobody rose to contradict the absurdity of the accusation ; on the contrary, it was still believed in the year V., and was a grievance against the last of the Jacobins—" Robespierre's tail." We find an echo of it in an unpublished song against the " Mountain " party :

ROBESPIERRE'S TOMB.

Couplets to any tune you like, as long as it suits the words. Written long after the vaudeville, and a fair copy made of it in its finished state at the end of the month Germinal, in the year V. of the republic.

Hither, blackbirds ! Hither, pies !
The famous tombstone come and see,
Where the precious body lies
Of Robespierre—a patriot he !
The head is wanting—cruel fate !
A pity this, if truth be told ;
None his heart could amputate,
Then the head as pledge behold.

As Law his way he sought to wing,
His own dictatorship promoting,
Till in reality the king
Of a republic—coloured Coating.
This splendid plan yet failed to bless ;
And cheated by his wolfish spleen,
Instead of wedding the Princess,
He wedded with the Guillotine.

Budding Cromwells, gods unwise,
Of his example, then, beware ;
Dream that the People, too, have eyes,
And look upon you everywhere.
But be ye first, at any rate,
Good Frenchmen, if ye can be such ;
And if ye cannot be so great,
Then try at least to seem as much.

Yet no : you never could be so ;
To seem true, man must stand the faster ;
On then, and in the footsteps go
Of your abominable master.
On, on then, sweetly hoping how
That door, too, will an exit make you ;
And 'tis mine to wish you now
Good-night—and may the Devil take you !

Is not this a singular proof of the belief which certain people held concerning the allegations of Barère and other Thermidorians ? It would be childish to discuss this belief here, or to try to refute it. The whole political life of Robespierre contradicts it. It is also quite useless to insist on the odium of an accusation which

saw such an ambition in the mercy of him who believed that the death of a young royal Princess would not be necessary to the safety of a republic, victorious on the frontiers and saved by its Jacobin faith.

III

OLD CHALABRE

HAVING shown Robespierre's influence on women, we can from the chorus of his devotees pick out some particular faces, whose manifestations of personal admiration may bring a precious contribution to this psychological inquiry.

Of all the correspondence that Robespierre had with women, that with Mme. de Chalabre is the most important. There are no documents more complete, to judge of the relationship between them.

It is not easy to settle the origin of this woman. The name she bore is quiet unknown in the history of the end of the eighteenth century. There were two branches of Chalabres—the Bruyères de Chalabre, to which belonged a Colonel of the Limousin Regiment; and the Roger de Chalabre, celebrated by the gamblers and the croupiers bearing this name. They inherited it. There was an officer of the Gardes

du Corps, son of the old Chalabre, who was banker and croupier of Marie-Antoinette's game, when his father lost on the same green table 42,000 louis—that is, 1,008,000 francs. It is true that sometimes he recovered himself, as, for example, in January, 1782, when he swept off, in the space of four hours, 1,800,000 livres from his opponents. The son also sometimes won. A letter from Mercy-Argenteau, Ambassador in Austria to Maria-Theresa, tells us that in November, 1779, he gained 19,000 louis when at Court at Marly. He played against a Chevalier de Saint-Louis, M. de Poinso, of whose kindness Tilly boasts. This is the Chalabre who figures in the greater portion of the obscene pamphlets against Marie Antoinette. How was Robespierre's admirer related to these famous gamblers? It is impossible to say exactly; one just knows the date of her birth—1752. She was called Jeanne-Marguerite, and talked about a suspicious marquise — suspicious enough, truly.

Did she come into relations with Robespierre in the time of the Constitutional Assembly, or in the early days of 1791? That is another point on which we are still in the dark. Her letters to the member of the Constituante lead us to believe that she wrote to him to ex-

press her admiration, and that he replied by sending pamphlets of his speeches, and so an exchange of letters went on, until daily visits rendered this unnecessary. As a fact, all the known letters of Mme. de Chalabre date from 1791 and the early months of 1792. We presume that about this time she visited her neighbours the Duplays in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Her house belonged to the Sisters of the Conception.

Probably the ladies of the Duplay family introduced her to Maximilien's intimate circle. Lamartine, informed by the widow Le Bas, says decidedly: "Mme. de Chalabre, a noble and rich woman, enthusiastic for Robespierre, devoting herself to him as the widows of Corinth and Rome devoted themselves to the Apostles of the New Religion, offering him the use of her fortune to promote the popularization of his ideas, and currying favour with the daughters of Duplay to merit a look from Robespierre."

Thiers judges the part played by Mme. de Chalabre less lyrically and with less indulgence. This "old Marquise, according to herself, was the first of those women who looked after this bloody pontiff as true devotees." It has been said—a slightly ridiculous statement—"that she was only useful to hold a looking-glass in which he could glance at his cravat." It is not quite in this

aspect that her correspondence shows her to us. There is nothing particularly intimate in these letters. It is true that the only letters we have are those written at the beginning of the relations between the member of the Convention and the Marquise. But there is good reason to believe that their letters continued in the same spirit. It is probable that Mme. de Chalabre was far from being beautiful. Her doctor, Thibault, says in a report of 30 Pluviôse, year III., that he had been attending her for nearly twenty years, "suffering as she is from scurvy and many other weaknesses, which call for frequent visits." And would Robespierre, who had beside him fresh young girls endowed with all the smiling, charming graces of youth, have preferred this old woman? If you say he was debauched, say also that he had no taste. So, then, we must judge of her only by the letters which Courtois has omitted.

"This lady's letters which have been preserved for us," writes M. Hamel, "are all full of the breath of the old liberty. She was not a republican like Charlotte Corday, moved by the revenging passions of Nemesis; she is rather a Spartan woman, whose heart has been inflamed with liberty and equality." A Spartan—that is saying a good deal. Really it was a



MARIE CHARLOTTE DE CORDAY /

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little less than that—a Mme. Roland less careful of classical discipline, but quite as loquacious and pedantic as she was in the overflowing of her lyrical and political style. These letters are not generally known, and that is a pity. They show us the Robespierre influence over the woman of the Revolution leading her into vehement flattery, easily explained when we know the extent of Robespierre's ascendancy over her. The correspondence begins with a letter the tone of which is polite and elegant, and which shows that it is one of the first written by the Marquise to the director she has chosen for her political conscience :

*“ To M. Robespierre, Member of the
Constitutional Assembly.*

“ February 26, 1791.

“ It is to the similarity of our patriotic feelings that I owe the praises you have addressed to me. In this direction my heart has deserved everything, and I am proud of it. Vanity will not allow me to make the exchange—I should lose too much. You have been kind enough to send me with your letter an excellent article on the principles of the organization of juries. According to my very feeble lights on this subject, it seems to me that you are near the truth,

as in all your other speeches ; and the patriot Camille [Desmoulins], in his last speech, paints with a natural charm, and a precision truly original, the character of your talents. One would think that the genius of the good and most unfortunate Jean-Jacques had inspired it, it has such a delicate touch ; he would have shed so many tears in reading this passage ! Good Camille, you deserve the happiness which I hope you will enjoy with your amiable companion. Let us return to politics. It seems to me, Sir, that committees in general are always wishing to make work for the mind, which is often wasted, for simple ideas are nearer Nature and truth. I hope that the progress of knowledge will make those better known and appreciated, day by day, who, detached from childish vanity, attain a noble and true courage to o'erleap the barrier of prejudice, and raise themselves to the height of revolution and reason ; unhappily, the number is but small. Very ' piquant ' events happened a few days ago ; I flatter myself that we shall know how to profit by them, as others have done. If all your time was not consecrated to the safety of your dear country, I should wish to talk to you of them, but I fear to rob you of your precious time. If it be possible to grant this favour, you will do

me much honour and give me much pleasure. Do not fear a large circle of lazy people ; that is not at all my style ; a very small number—very small indeed—of old friends makes up my society ; very good patriots, for I should not know how to welcome others. Without esteem there can be no pleasure or happiness ; you add to ours, Sir, the deepest gratitude, and you will find it in our expressions as well as in our hearts.

“ CHALABRE.

“ You will approve of my not using the servile form customarily used.”

The second letter is in a livelier key. This time Mme. Chalabre approaches the political problem from the front, and raises her voice with familiar vehemence against the decree on the finances, which offends her and makes her despair :

“ At last, Sir, our ruin is accomplished by the frightful decree, which places the administration of our finances again in the hands of greedy courtiers, thanks to the recognized customs which lead the National Assembly to-day. No, no, the nation cannot consent to be enslaved by laws contrary to her real interests ; this last injustice will arouse her from her carelessness.

Is it worth while to make a Revolution, and to finish it in this fashion ? Heaven ! what iniquity, what degradation of the human race ! And it is gold, that vile metal which makes men stupid and ferocious.

“ What a contempt for wealth real patriots ought to have ! They should disdain it, repulse it, and fear it as a subtle poison which corrupts everything it touches. Happiness and virtue are only found in mediocrity. Riches and virtue are incompatible, and nothing has convinced us of this like the Revolution. Only three members—and you are of their number, always in the path of honour—three only have fought against this infamous decree. What will the provinces say about it ? I should be glad if they all, without exception, protested strongly against it. Confidence cannot return, and order and economy cannot be restored. The property of the clergy will be wasted ; the matter is settled : the Court takes possession, and our best deputies keep a guilty silence. What ! it is principally to remedy the disorder in finance that the nation nominates representatives, and after eighteen months’ suspense the pit opens again to swallow up our resources ! What cruelty, to make us languish so long and then to overwhelm us with misfortune ! I cannot tell you

how I am afflicted by these thoughts. You feel as strongly as I do, I am certain, about these last blows at our liberty. Fatal decree, cursed decree, which breaks through the bounds of just reparation, and does away with the gentle bonds of equality! Shameless men, who have passed it, may you one day be overpowered by remorse!—that will be vengeance enough for us. Unhappy country!

“We are bursting with indignation. Here we are constitutionally under the yoke of tyrants. Ah, let us leave this sad topic. Do me the honour, Sir, to accept a little dinner with patriots in the beginning of next week. Choose the day which suits you best, and which will interfere the least with your work. Give me two days’ notice, so that I may be able to invite M. and Mme. Bitaubé, who will be delighted to meet you. I remain full of the esteem and fraternal gratitude of all good citizens towards you.

“CHALABRE.

“A thousand thanks for your pamphlets.”

On January 2, 1791, Robespierre pronounced the first part of a great speech against the war. He rose against the project of levying three armies destined to drive back the emigrants—

armies which could also serve to fight the coming republic. On January 11 Maximilien finished this speech, which was the highest point of his oratory ; and that is the date of Mme. de Chalabre's letter which follows :

“ No, I can find no expression to convey to the inimitable Robespierre the surprise, the emotion, caused by the reading of his interesting and salutary speech in the last number of the *Révolution de Paris*. The patriots have done well to print it there, because this paper is much read and goes everywhere. We cannot be quick enough to warn all true Frenchmen against the snares of war.

“ But, alas ! I fear that the National Assembly has already decided, for Ramond the deputy has told us of a fine long report from the Diplomatic Committee, and the inference is doubtless for war. Just Heaven ! what treachery ! Unhappy country ! False leaders are guiding you out of the right road by new trickery more cunning than that of the moderates ; their character is not so openly marked with baseness, and therefore they are the more dangerous. These patriots have lost their way ; they say to those who do not want the war . . . Ha ! let us go on losing our way, so that we may save

our country. There was another speech at the Jacobins' on Monday, praised by the cruel war party, who are mad for it as crows for carrion. If they succeed, there is no hope for the country. To be a conqueror with the power of enmity is to be conquered. There lies the whole question ; but, as you say, we always wish to take sides. How, then, can we show so little judgment as to fall into such a snare ! It seems incredible to me ; instead of following Nature, we like to argue against her. Fie ! fie ! Let us have eloquence ; now is the time for it. Feeble beings, boasting your knowledge, the instinct of animals is superior to your fine minds, because it never deceives.

“ I cannot refrain from expressing the feelings of gratitude with which the upright conduct of the faithful Robespierre inspires me, in spite of the advice which he himself gives us, not to give ourselves over to these joys. His touching modesty will produce the contrary effect, judging by me ; but it will not be dangerous to liberty—the most noble emulation will be the fruit of it.

“ Friendly greetings.

“ CHALABRE.”

But in the whole of this correspondence, the most emphatic and most womanly letter, even

in its sentiment, is that which Mme. de Chalabre addresses to her friend on March 20, 1792 :

“Patriotic friend, I am pining away with impatience in expectation of your speech, which has been put off by so many incidents. So now we have a Jacobin Ministry. You have foreseen this resource of Machiavellianism in a fix. Patriots who see everything through rose-coloured spectacles talk with pleasure about the last Jacobin sitting—the presence of the new Ministers who wished to communicate with the club. Good God ! Is liberty, then, lost for ever ? A kiss of peace is offered to the most zealous defender of holy liberty, as if it were a guarantee of these fine promises or as if he were accessible to flattery ! So does Vice take a corner of Virtue’s cloak to hide its ugliness, and impose on trusting minds. As for me, everything seems blacker than ever. If the National Assembly lets the occasion go by which now presents itself to revenge the nation against a power at enmity with us, convinced of having plotted its ruin in upholding the counter-revolutionaries of Arles, Avignon, etc.—if there be not one patriot in the Assembly courageous enough to tear down the veil which hides these horrible and black manœuvres, and to paint in

strokes of fire the dangers of preserving this odious power, of letting even a month pass—France is lost ! Alas ! after so many hopes, must we be resigned to see our unhappy country covered with ruins and ashes ? That is what those guilty men desire. No, no ! they are condemned, and all is saved.

“ I can no longer imagine the views of the patriots ; so much slowness exasperates me. O Robespierre ! your genius must find the remedy to our misfortunes. There is but you, so to speak ; you leave me a single ray of hope. I cannot describe the sadness of my soul to you ; the more I see of certainty in the others, the more I tremble—our dangers increase. If you make your speech to-morrow, do not forget me, I implore you. In order to save our young friend the trouble of coming twice in the same day—for it is a long way from here to you—I shall wait dinner till two o’clock to-morrow. Accept, accept the assurance of my inviolable attachment.

“ CHALABRE.

“ Dear patriot, another remembrance : I am afraid that they will pass the Marriage Bill, which the wise motion of M. Français had laid aside, and will displease the *Royal Chronicle* and M. Brissot. What a dangerous position at the

time when Fanaticism is sharpening her daggers ! As if the Assembly had not many more important things to decide !”

About this *Chronicle* the great orator of the human race persuades himself, with sufficient ridicule, that the nation will accept his Ministerial conquering tricks for truths. The praises he gives to the general officers—above all to Lückner—are quite in the style of good Father Punch ; is it by chance the style of the Ministers ? That would be an excellent question for the journalists to ask him.

These are the letters taken from the Thermidorian portfolio. Are there any others ? Yes, certainly, since in the Benjamin Fillon collection we see this other autograph note of the Marquise, which escaped the attention of the editor of the *Papiers Omis* in 1828 :

“ My blood boils. I have just read with more indignation than surprise a projected Bill which, but for M. Reubell, would have been passed to-day—the establishment of a Provost’s Court, a court of blood against the patriots, abhorred even under despotism. I hope that to-morrow the patriots Buzot, Pétion, Robespierre, and Grégoire, will rally in force against the Bill. But, alas ! I am inexpressibly worried.”



PÉTION

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As for the letters that Robespierre probably wrote to Mme. de Chalabre, they have disappeared. By this we lose one side of his psychology, and we are obliged to judge by the letters of one of the parties only. Moreover, the examination is conculsive. It confirms us in the certainty of the ascendancy over women, controlled by the strictness of his character, and the agreement of his private life and morality.

Meanwhile the civic purity of the intentions of Mme. de Chalabre may be suspected, and a note of the member of the Convention, J.-P. Picqué, tells us so. We quote it fully, for it brings new arguments to the discussion which we cannot pass over in silence. In a manuscript brought to light by M. Pelissier, he wrote :

“ Robespierre lodged with the Dupleix [*sic*] in a modest and small carpenter's house, Rue Saint-Honoré. Some members of the Jacobin Club and of the Paris Commune, his correspondents, devoted blind partisans, whom he sent to the Revolutionary Court, and the Dupleix family, formed his circle. Eager, but reserved, irresolute, bold and timid, pompous, vindictive, and jealous, he was entirely occupied by his ambition. Continually worried by terror and excitement which were inseparable from his position and his irritable temperament, trying to find in

his restlessness some moments of calm amongst his family and devoted friends, he gave himself up to their inspirations.

“The Comtesse de Chalabre—one does not know exactly how she was introduced into this particular society—once arrived at a great degree of confidence, skilful, insinuating, and familiar, she became the intimate friend of the Dupleix girls, passed her life with them, helped with the drawing up of the fatal list of suspects, pointed them out at her pleasure, directed the anger of Robespierre, and frightened him by her revelations, pretending to soothe him. Her hand wrote the names of the patriots, those of the minority of the nobility met together in the Third Estate in 1789, enemies of the Court, the Polignacs denounced first to the Jacobins, and by Robespierre to the Committee of Public Safety, and sent to the Revolutionary Tribunal. The most atrocious judgments dictated by this fury found well-salaried apologists. I have seen her, after stormy sittings, plead, whisper, encourage, and wipe Robespierre’s brow; this man, so indifferent to women, gave her frequent testimony of consideration and affectionate confidence. The powerful agent of the Royalist faction, the frightful Chalabre, I am convinced, conducts this cruelly long persecu-

tion against the founders of liberty and the minority of the revolutionary nobility, literary men, members of the Constitutional Assembly, and all the best defenders of the country. In that way were sacrificed illustrious victims of Royalist vengeance—Bailly, Thouret, Barnave, Chapelier, Condorcet, Lepeletier, Beauharnais, Custine, Biron, Malesherbes, Dillon, Broglie—mixed with courtiers who had lost favour, innocent women, counter-revolutionaries, and brigands; frightful pictures which have left the most odious memories of the republican government, quite innocent of all these paid cruelties, called forth by the implacable enemies of France.”

And he insists and repeats again in a note :

“Robespierre cherished a profound hatred against the Constitutional Assembly, which had not appreciated his talents. Every member was his personal enemy. They explain the number of his victims by saying they were sacrificed to his vanity. The infamous Chalabre seconded the vengeance of the Royalists against the courtiers who had gone over to the ranks of the patriots. So perished Custine, Beauharnais, Dillon, Broglie, Aiguillon, Lauzun, Malesherbes, and so many others, struck down by secret enemies, jealous men, and creditors. Robespierre and Coblenz marched together.”

How is the rôle ascribed by Picqué to the Marquise possible? It is quite impossible in consideration of the complete absence of any documents, conclusive in proof, to fix it with exactitude; but is not this the place to repeat the sentence from a forgotten work?—"Many great ladies of the *ancien régime*, moved by a spirit of charity, did not disdain to chain to their chariot some of those wild members of the Convention which made everything around them tremble." Did Mme. de Chalabre act this part with regard to Robespierre?

Certain equivocal details of his life lend probability to the accusation, but the fact that the reaction of Thermidor hunted her down, because of her relations with the Incorruptible, speaks in her favour. We see her, in fact, arrested on 22 Thermidor, almost the morrow of the execution of Maximilien. She was entered as a prisoner at the Talaru house, Rue de la Loi, formerly Rue Richelieu. Up to 25 Thermidor she lived there, and was then transferred to Sainte-Pélagie. From there she passed on to the Bourbe (or Maternity Hospital) on 8 Vendémiaire of year III.; to the Luxembourg on 25 Brumaire; to the Du Plessis College on 2 Floréal; on the 28th she returned to the Bourbe. Then she was set free, after a year's

imprisonment all but five days. Thermidor of the year III. sees her trying to gather together the ruins of her scattered property. Henceforward she has no history. She is plunged into obscurity which year after year weighs on her, buries her, and separates her from history. Where did she die ? When ? No one knows. Only her letters remain, saved from the shipwreck of time, fragile and lasting waifs, which bear witness to her Jacobin devotion. But somewhere also, in a portfolio in the Archives, the proof of her woman's weakness, her denial, remains. She hated Robespierre fallen ; she insulted Robespierre dead. Her devotion was her only halo. Why does Le Havard tarnish her with the scattered dust of this portfolio, which makes us acknowledge that she was too weak for the big rôle she tried to play ?

IV

THE SISTER OF THE TORCH OF PROVENCE

LESS important than it was in the case of Mme. Chalabre is the note we ought to consecrate to this other devotee of Robespierre's—Mirabeau's sister. If there be a surprise in the papers overlooked by Courtois, it is to find among them a letter from this woman almost overshadowed by Riquetti, but whose name gives singular value to the missive. Singular encounter ! Strange meeting ! Mirabeau and Robespierre—these are the two poles of the Revolution. The first arrests it, and sells himself ; the second urges it on, and buys himself. The one is thunder and corruption ; the other is lightning and incorruptibility. No tie between them, but eloquence alone. In the first oratorical jousts of the Revolution, the Torch of Provence did not look without disdain upon the Candle of Arras. From the heights of a new and spontaneous glory he watched the thin

lawyer of Artois rise slowly but inflexibly. That was the time when the Assembly made fun of his sharp voice. Then Mirabeau died. They carried him to the French Pantheon, and the lawyer of Arras rose to the height which was denied to the man whose head fell beneath the knife of 1793. What did Maximilien hate in Riquetti ? His civic lie, the mask which fell the day after his death, when the iron chest which gave up the secrets of his treachery was opened.

Mirabeau the Thunderer was nothing else but the Judas of a lost cause, the conjurer with his hands full of impure gold, and the incorruptible conscience of Robespierre can only judge the accused. And this corruption is precisely what adds to the interest of the letter from Mirabeau's sister. "No, citizen," she cries, "they shall never corrupt me !" She also tries to anticipate Maximilien's evident objection. Why should he not suspect deceit in the offer she makes ? Does the sister deserve more trust than the brother—that brother whose ashes were swept from a desecrated Pantheon ? It is very probably this which regulates Robespierre's conduct with regard to the "woman Riquetti." She did not procure the situation

she sought after, and this devotee finds her god refractory. Here is her letter :

“ 30 *Germinal*, year II. of the Republic.

“ DEAR ROBESPIERRE,

“ Do not imagine that I am never governed by interest. I propose to the Committee of Public Safety to make me useful in teaching reading, writing, and music ; also in teaching the A, B and C of the Catechism of Nature, which has been presented to the Convention. I attend the lectures without ceasing ; that is a code of instruction which feeds heart and mind ; from these I go to the Jacobin Club. The principles of virtue which you express in your words, as in your actions, have made me conceive the plan of teaching children gratis. I should do wrong to the officers, to the women of the country. . . . No, citizen, they shall never bribe me. Believe me, I would rather die of misery for the sake of virtue ; that is not dishonourable ; but gold corrupted by vice has a bitterness which poisons both conscience and customs. Greece was lost because of luxury. The Romans were virtuous, and led a frugal life ; the mind was enlarged by fatigue, hardened by vice, and born again to virtue. My dear Robespierre, I shall never leave you ; do not



MADAME ELISABETH, SISTER OF LOUIS XVI.

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fear that. I shall be virtuous, and follow your advice and your example; and perhaps far away from you I should be lost. No, firm and unchangeable, you are an eagle scouring the heavens; your mind, your heart, are both seductive. Love of good is your war-cry; mine is that you may live long for the happiness of the Convention that I love. I am flattered that you take notice of my demand. I have no other wish than to make myself useful to the republic that I love. Count on my affection. I am a citizen with you, and salute you with fraternal affection.

“RIQUETTI.

“To the Citizen Robespierre, Member of the National Convention, at the Committee of Public Safety.”

What did Robespierre think of all these protestations? What follows answers the question. He did not admit the disinterestedness of her whose name was the denial of sacrifice for the civic ideal. Was he wrong? But thanks to her it is possible once more to lay stress on the attraction which Maximilien had for women. One can see the hidden feelings mixed with political enthusiasm, the passionate tint with which they so clumsily colour themselves. Attraction is the

more irresistible the more the man rebels and refuses himself. It is because he does not yield, but remains at the austere height which he desires, that he dominates those who envelop him in the whirlwind of their desires. He gives the example of resistance, of preference of country before love, and self-respect in preference to the complacent and pert smile of a posterity low enough not to understand the nobleness of his renunciation.

V

THE SENTIMENTAL ENGLISHWOMAN

HE was responsible, they would say, for the fate of the country, and it is to him that those women appeal who are animated by the ideal of freedom. But why to him, and not to others ? That would mean replying to the possible denial of his influence.

To go with each of these letters, addressed to him by unknown or famous admirers, it is almost necessary to make a new edition of all the commentaries already published. All have the same origin, all appeal to the same sentiments—those sentiments of which Mme. de Chabre and Mirabeau's sister have given us the tone. The sentiment of the letter which follows is slightly different. It came from an Englishwoman, Miss J. Theeman Stephen,* the author of some novels written in the fashion of the time. There Robespierre is blamed in a manner

* Or, Freeman Shepherd.

which is disconcerting at first sight, and nevertheless the Englishwoman's grievance is quite to the honour of the lawyer. With what does she reproach him ? With not having accepted the money she has placed at his disposal for the public good. Doubtless Robespierre could have accepted it for this motive. He did not do so, because of the principle of incorruptibility which is his rule of conduct. And that was in 1791, for the letter from the Englishwoman was written in the early days of 1792. But to praise him for this—to insist on praise—is superfluous. Is not this same incorruptibility the only thing which Robespierre's detractors concede to him ? But to set this against a woman's offer is to want politeness. That is what Miss Theeman Stephen says : "The French were formerly noted for their courtesy towards the weaker sex." This courtesy, at least in the sense that the Englishwoman attaches to it, was always wanting in the disciple of Jean-Jacques. His policy was not made up of politeness. He was polite in the manner which the *grand siècle* demanded. It is not without interest to see these reproaches take shape under a foreign pen. It is sufficient to remember here the struggle which England carried on against the revolutionary administration. It is particularly curious to see Robe-

spierre excepted from the general proscription pronounced by the British oligarchy against the men of the Terror. Of course they do not praise him ; they do better : they place him above the conventional rabble. They lifted him above the other actors in the tragedy. Clearly he is pointed out as the master of to-morrow, the master of a restored administration, which he prepares in the present confusion. He is the head of the Jacobins—perhaps Jacobinism itself—but if they come to terms some day it will be with him only. Barère denounces this in the sitting of the Convention on 7 Prairial, year II., as a slander destined to bring Robespierre to ruin. In fact, he is mistaken, and attributes to the hatred of Jacobinism that which is only the effect of the tacit recognition of an indisputable power strengthened day by day.

That is why, let us repeat, it is certainly curious to find one of the first references to it in the letter of a woman. And the strain of it must arrest attention.

“SIR,” she wrote, “I do not like dissimulation—I never practise it on any occasion towards anyone, I cannot bear that anybody should practise it towards me. You have done so, Sir.

You made me believe that you would accept my little offering for the public welfare, and you have not accepted it."

What she then explains proves that she has a small fortune, and that she has placed money at Robespierre's disposal by a cheque to his bankers :

"The accounts of receipt and disbursement which my bankers have just sent me, according to their yearly custom, go to prove it. My illusion was very sweet and pleasant, and my awakening so much the more painful. You are under obligations, Sir, in honour, as in pity, to compensate me by realities. If the date of this order was an obstacle to the negotiation of it, kindly send it back to me, and I will draw up another invested with all the required formalities for its immediate acceptance."

And to persuade him she recalls to him his promise of a letter, which seems to have been definitely lost. This is much to be regretted on every side, firstly for the reasons which Robespierre gave, and then because it was a letter to a woman, and a document of that description should be known.

"You have contracted, Sir," goes on the Englishwoman, "the obligation to accept it and

to have it paid to you, informing me of the use you were going to make of it. Do not despise the English like this; do not treat with this humiliating depreciation an Englishwoman's stammering aspirations of good-will towards the common cause of all nations. The French were formerly noted for their courtesy towards the weaker sex, and the more sensitive by its weakness to injury. It were bad for us if the Revolution were to take this precious privilege from us! But I ask for a more legitimate right. Do not do to others that which you would not like others to do to you.

"In the most persevering determination to seek satisfaction until I obtain it, I have the honour to be, Sir, your vindictive servant,

"THEEMAN STEPHEN.

"*January 12, 1792.*

"To M. Robespierre, formerly Member of the Constitutional Assembly, at the house of M. Dupley, carpenter, Rue Saint-Honoré, opposite Rue Saint-Florentin, at Paris."

We know nothing further of this correspondence, but when we see Robespierre refusing money we can easily understand why Courtois was in such a hurry to leave out the letter from his report of Nivôse of the year III. He says

he did not wish to enlarge his little work beyond measure. So it seems.

Under cover of civic fervour, which they show, none of these letters touches the question of love. We shall arrive at that with the letter from the young woman of Nantes.

This letter, although ignored by Courtois, as by Berville and Barrière, proceeds incontestably from among the papers seized at Robespierre's house after Thermidor. It belonged to the famous collection of Colonel Maurin, which was composed, as is well known, of the papers of Palloy, the breaker-up of the Bastille; and of Albertine Marat, the sister of the Friend of the People. In the Catalogue Maurin this letter figures in 1862, under the number 368 (4°). The sale did not take place, and the collection, sold privately, was divided among different amateurs. Nevertheless a large portion of the papers fell into the hands of Étienne Charavay, who probably sold the letter of the young woman of Nantes, with other papers addressed to Robespierre, to M. Benjamin Fillon. Thanks to him the whole of the letter is known, and we ought to congratulate ourselves on this, for no document throws more light on the physiological side of the worship women devoted to Robespierre.

“ 13 *Prairial*, year II.

“ MY DEAR ROBESPIERRE,

“ I have been in love with you ever since the Revolution began, but I was bound, and I knew how to conquer my passion. To-day I am free, because I have lost my husband in the War of the Vendée, and before the Supreme Being I now declare my love for you.

“ I flatter myself, my dear Robespierre, that you will be sensible of the confession I am making. It costs a woman something to make such an acknowledgment, but the paper suffers it all, and one blushes less far away than when face to face with each other. You are my god, and I know no other on earth. I look upon you as my guardian angel, and I wish to live only under your laws ; they are so gentle that I swear to you that, if you are as free as I am to unite myself with you for life, I offer you as dowry the true qualities of a good republican, 40,000 francs income, and myself a young widow of twenty-two. If this offer suits you, answer me, I implore you. My address must be with the widow Jakin, *poste restante* at Nantes. If I ask you to write to me at the *poste restante*, it is because I fear that my mother will scold me for my indiscretion. If I am happy enough to have a favourable answer from you, I shall

show it to her at once. Then no more mystery. Good-bye, my well-beloved. Think of the young woman of Nantes, and of that unhappy city so afflicted by the scourge of war. As you deserve to have so much influence in the Assembly, do all you can to deliver us from the wretched condition in which we find ourselves. I am not asking for myself, but for all these brave Sans-Culottes and good citizens. Answer me, I beg of you ; if not, I shall become importunate in writing. Good-bye once more. Think of the unfortunate woman who lives only for thee.

“Do you use the seal of the Convention ? Write to me as if you were a private person.”

She writes this quite simply in her clumsy writing, confiding to the rough paper the secret yearning of her heart.

How does she look upon Robespierre, with whom she has been in love since the dawn of his glory ? How does she appeal to him—this great man of whom she knows nothing, except that away yonder he is the master, and to whom she offers herself blushing, panting, anxious, and distracted ? He is her divinity, her guardian angel, as she writes ; and doubtless in the evening, pale with the remembrance of her

boldness, she pictures him reading, there in the great city, her poor provincial letter. If she knew ! If she saw him, her god, her hero, and her lover, in his dull room in the Duplays' house, bending over his sorry wooden table, in the bare and rough setting of his austere life ! Poor little woman of Nantes, who is dreaming, perhaps, about her great man, ensconced becomingly in the luxury of a royal palace, given over to the Revolution.

That is the picture she kept of him, brilliant, radiant, and charming, the vision of the Robespierre of Prairial, promulgating his consoling worship to an audience lifted to immortality by his word ! She does not know, and perhaps never will know, that one sultry, heavy evening in June, laden with the scanty perfume of a Paris summer, he broke the seal of the love-letter in the little nook which is at once kingdom and palace to this tyrant, to this dictator. June evening, full of the odour from the leaves of the convent garden so near, full of moths which fly into the living flame leaning over towards the table—an evening on which, in the street, the laughter of children breaks out with the voices of people breathing the fresh air on their doorsteps. And he, who in the quiet night is preparing for the civic pentecost of

20 Prairial, reads this trusting and ingenuous letter, and dreams about the lines which tremble a little before his eyes. What a cut of the whip to the subdued flesh governed by the most austere sense of duty ! What sudden visions raised behind those closed eyelids ! There she is, the girl in Nantes, offering herself—the loving one waiting and hoping. It may mean happiness—the simple happiness of an untormented life, fireside, tenderness, the lamplight of home, the window open to a grand horizon, the house full of roses and alight with smiles. Let him say a word, and all this will be his—this happy fate so commonplace, this certain happiness of the common people !

Perhaps the evening itself is an accomplice to the temptation. The children's laughter rises, voices chatter, and the odour of the convent hedges gets weaker, and hangs heavy, tenacious, penetrating, unutterable. . . . And the peace of the Prairial night, and the call to happiness under the ineffable softness of the clear sky, in which shines the wandering light of the stars !

Then he opens his eyes, sees the table, the lamp, and the scattered papers on which the ink of his next discourse is drying. He sees all that, his present life, and the fatal promise

drawn from out of his future. He has made his choice.

Poor loving little woman of Nantes, who will go on hoping for his answer, and will only cease expecting it when the axe of 10 Thermidor resounds through France into eternity.

VI

THE MYSTERIOUS AFFAIR OF THE "MOTHER OF GOD"

THE affair Catherine Théot precedes Thermidor by two months. This date is not without its significance, for it throws some light upon that mysterious event which helped to render Robespierre ridiculous before completely crushing him. How, and especially why, should the Incorruptible have been mixed up in that matter? We have known Robespierre assailed by worshipping women, and it is only just that we should endeavour to defend his memory against an imaginary accusation which pretends that the dictator had exercised a preponderating influence over a group of hysterical women, whom he himself described as "a few zealous imbeciles."

The Revolution had been preceded by a mystical crisis, the powerful influence of which Fauchet, Lamourette, and others, were bound to acknowledge. This crisis took a philosophical



MARIE-THÉRÈSE-CHARLOTTE, DAUGHTER OF LOUIS XVI.
(Madame Royale)

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aspect among the clergy; to the title of Christians was added that of philosophers anxious to detect in Holy Writ “the explanation of the present and the revelation of the future.” Therein lies the genesis of a civic religion, recognizing the importance of dogma, but freed from the material ties of the Church, and the explanation of the fact that so many priests took the oath of loyalty to the republic. Parallel with this philosophical crisis was another—which was nothing else but the manifestation of a religious hysteria—the origin of which may be traced back to the first era of Christianity. The clergy took a lively interest in this movement. They examined the prophetesses and clairvoyantes, and discussed and verified their sayings as far as it was possible. This went on until the first days of the Revolution, when the days of the prophetesses were at an end. Only one partisan remained faithful to them—Dom Antoine-Christophe Gerle, a native of Auvergne, Prior of the Convent of Chartreux, and clerical deputy for the Seneschality of Riom at the States-General.

Gerle had started his intimacy with the hysterical visionaries by a liaison with a prophetess of Périgord, a certain Suzette Labrousse. Like all of her kind, this inspired lady indulged in

abnormal practices—mixing excrement with her food, besmearing her face with whitewash—predicting as a result of it universal peace, the downfall of the ecclesiastical power, and the resurrection of the First Dauphin and of Mirabeau. Subsequent events gave the lie direct to all her predictions. But for the moment Gerle was her zealous follower. On June 13, 1790, he had tried to discuss the predictions of Suzette before the members of the National Assembly—with what success it can easily be imagined. The daily papers were all ready in making fun of Gerle and his prophetess, and the *Chronique de Manège* published a tragedy entitled “Les Amours de Dom Gerle,” and a notice which was soon followed by many others written on the same lines :

“With great pleasure and an extraordinary *civic* joy we announce the important event which took place last Thursday, September 9, 1790.

“The incomparable Dom Gerle has freed himself from his old prejudices. He has cast off his monastic garb, which is no longer suitable to him, since he has promised to marry Mlle. Labrousse, and has donned the English morning coat, fine cashmere trousers, and a round hat. The Jacobin Club has already congratulated

him upon his metamorphosis, and advised him not to go to the Assembly for a few days, so that he could at his leisure receive the visits of the good patriots.”

At the beginning of 1792 the prophetess of Périgord decided to go to Rome, with a view to converting the Pope. Fauchet granted her the necessary permission. But, once in Rome, she was thrown into prison by the Holy Office, and only released in 1798. Gerle remained alone after the departure of Suzette. He was a brave man, a good patriot, only somewhat eccentric. To console him for the loss of Suzette, fate sent him another hysterical mystic—Catherine Théot. This woman was already advanced in years, having been born in 1725 at Baranton. From her early youth she had been plunged in mysticism, passing her time in reading the lives of the saints ; and gradually these studies turned her head, and made her lose the little common sense she was endowed with. She thought of nothing but religion and mysticism, imagining herself, like her patron saint, Catherine of Siena, to be called upon to become the spouse of Christ and explain His message. Her own nephew does not hesitate to call her mad. She was poor, and found occupation in the convent of the “Miramionnes,” where she did all the

housework. The convent atmosphere developed her mystical tendencies and taste for conversion and prophecy. She began to visit churches and convents, and predicted the universal peace. She uttered odd and obscure prophecies, and manifested a deep hatred for the clergy. But her efforts "to convert the sacerdotal race"—as she called the clergy in her writings dictated to her secretary and disciple Hastain—"and make the priests publicly confess their monstrosities, proved futile." The sacerdotal race received her remonstrances and lessons with a very bad grace, and, by order of the Lieutenant of Police Le Noir, she was sent to the Bastille on March 17, 1779. She was questioned, and her answers constitute her complete confession of faith. God, she pretended, had vouchsafed unto her the spiritual maternity of the new Jesus to come, and therefore she was the "Mother of God." She was transferred to the Salpêtrière, where she remained four years, when she was considered to be cured and set free. The doctors were, however, mistaken. She at once continued her apostolic mission. From 1782 to 1792 she lived in obscurity, whilst the nucleus of her adepts gradually increased. It was then that she met Gerle. She was living with a lady friend, a certain widow Godefroy,

in a miserable garret, on the fifth floor of a house in the Rue des Rosiers, No. 20. The number of people coming to visit her having increased considerably in 1793, the procurator of the commune felt himself obliged to interfere. A search was made on the premises, but Chaumette, the procurator, had the good sense to leave the sect alone, and “allow the Mother of God to talk nonsense in peace.”

This “ridiculous pagoda,” however, thought it necessary to hide herself, in order to escape the assiduities of her partisans. Her nephew found her in company of the widow Godefroy in the Rue Contrescarpe, a narrow street in the quarter of the Observatoire, not far from the Panthéon. Gerle lived not far away, in the Rue des Postes, No. 6, for he had become one of the chief dignitaries of the association. Besides Gerle, the “Mother of God,” and the widow Godefroy, there was also another young lady, who addressed Gerle as follows: “O Gerle, darling of God, worthy of the love of the Lord, it is in heaven that you will enjoy the delight, of being envied by the most brilliant monarchs, and that the diadem will be placed on your peaceful brow.” She styled herself one of the “little sisters” — the “doves” of Gerle. This interesting young lady’s name was Rose Raffet.

The ceremonies practised in the Rue Contrescarpe were in reality very simple, and M. Mathiez very reasonably remarks that one need not imagine them such as described by Senar, the agent of the Committee of Public Safety, who arrested this band of buffoons, and related the details in his memoirs. He exaggerated, embellished and invented, magnifying what was ridiculous, amplifying what was comical, as if the truth were not sufficient. But in his *procès-verbal*, which is to be found in the Archives Nationales, he related the facts more simply.

Here we see the Mother of God seated on a sort of throne, with Gerle and the widow Godefroy by her side. The widow was reading the Apocalypse, whilst Rose Raffet was singing hymns. As for Gerle, he was preaching. The new-comers were initiated by a kiss on the forehead, on the left cheek, on the eyes, on the chin, and behind the right ear. Sénar says that the Mother of God "passed over his lips a piece of disgusting tongue"; and Vadier declared, amidst the laughter of the Convention, that the chin of the Mother of God was being sucked by the catechumens with a feeling of voluptuousness! Rose Raffet was especially fond of this pleasure. The whole affair was absolutely ridiculous, but many people were nevertheless attracted, and

the ceremonies continued until 28 Prairial, when Sénar and Heron presented themselves and asked to be initiated. In the midst of the ceremony Sénar suddenly opened the window, making a sign to his soldiers posted in the street. The house was invaded, and nineteen zealous followers of the Mother of God were arrested. They proclaimed their faith, and demanded to be put to death as martyrs. One might almost have fancied oneself in the days of the Catacombs and the first era of persecuted Christianity. Things, however, took a less tragic turn. Four of the faithful were at once set free, whilst the others were led away. But the sect had been put an end to.

What part did Robespierre play in all this ? In reality, the Incorruptible had nothing whatever to do with the sect of the Mother of God ; but Gerle served the purposes of those who, through this ridiculous farce, were preparing the tragedy of 9 Thermidor.

Gerle had been a member of the Constituent Assembly, and a colleague of Robespierre. Towards the end of 1793 the Revolutionary Committee of his section refused to grant him a certificate of civic loyalty, and he addressed himself to Robespierre. The latter wrote the following lines : “ I hereby testify that Gerle,

my colleague of the Constituent Assembly, has upheld the true principles of the Revolution, and has always struck me as being a good patriot, although a priest." These lines proved little, and a letter was therefore found in the straw mattress of the Mother of God—a letter addressed to Robespierre—in which he was called the Son of the Supreme Being, the Eternal Word, the Redeemer of the Human Species, the Messiah predicted by the Prophets. Vilate considers this letter to be false. "This letter," he says, "did certainly not emanate from Catherine Théot, for the old sanctimonious fool did not even know how to sign her name." And even Sénar is doubtful as to the authenticity of this letter. He does not dare, however, to admit that the letter had been placed under the straw mattress. A proof was required, and the enemies of the Incorruptible had found it in this letter. The conspirators, however, were not yet satisfied. Elements of a counter-revolutionary character were also required, and they were discovered in the arrest of several persons suspected of royalism. The mystification of the Mother of God now becomes clear. She was a devotee of Robespierre, and it was in the interest of the enemies of the Incorruptible to compromise him in the affair of the mad mystic. The matter

was referred to the Revolutionary tribunal. The enemies of Robespierre triumphed.

To judge the devotees of Robespierre, to send them to the guillotine—was it not a most terrible blow aimed at the power, the popularity, of Maximilien ? Robespierre himself was aware of the danger. His enemies pretended that in this farce was hidden a dangerous conspiracy against the republic, and some even pretended to detect in it the hand of England. In a famous speech which is a model of eloquence and the political testament of the Incorruptible, Maximilien will later on openly accuse his enemies of their manœuvres. For the present, however, they triumphed. They had availed themselves of the fact that Robespierre was so popular with women. To hear the old devotees proclaim him the Son of the Supreme Being could in no way surprise those who every day witnessed the spectacle of numerous women applauding their idol from the crowded galleries of the Convention. It was not surprising—it was only ridiculous.

But did Robespierre really exercise some influence over the association in the Rue Contrescarpe ? There is absolutely no proof for it. Never was the name of the Incorruptible mentioned in the sermons of Gerle, and yet the latter

was one of his admirers. As a matter of fact, the Mother of God, Gerle, and their followers, lived too much in the expectation of a miracle to worry their heads about politics. But there is even a better proof of the innocence of Robespierre in this affair—the fate of the followers of Mother Théot after Thermidor. Had the accusations of Vadier been serious, they ought to have been treated as satellites of the despot, as accomplices of the tyrant, and shared his punishment, like his other friends of the Convention. Such, however, was not the case. After Thermidor the members of the sect of the Mother of God were forgotten in their respective prisons. Catherine Théot died at the Petite-Force in Germinal, year III., whilst her nephew was vainly endeavouring to recall himself to the memory of his accusers. He sent petition after petition, accompanying his complaints by the following post-scriptum :

“ If this letter falls into the hands of a citizen secretary, I beg of him not to throw it into the wastepaper-basket, but to remember that the vicissitudes and injustices of Fortune do not respect innocence ; that therefore the most upright of men is not safe from her blows. That will be enough, I think, to make him put himself in my place, and to feel how important

it is that this letter should be forwarded to the address given, and that justice should be done. If that citizen's soul is sympathetic, he will be rewarded for granting my request.”

He was lodged in the Luxembourg prison on the first-floor, close to the bathrooms, cell No. 2. On 29 Nivôse, year III., he was set at liberty, and Gerle also less than a month later — 24 Pluviôse. He found an obscure little niche in the civil department, and died no one knows when or how. These *illuminati* had paid by five months' imprisonment the Thermidorians' first attempt against the Incorruptible.

VII

CÉCILE RENAULT, AND THE TRAP PREPARED BY THE THERMIDORIANS

THE farce prepared to ruin Robespierre having failed, resort was made to drama. Ridicule being unsuccessful, his enemies appealed to tragedy : Cécile Renault was the pretext of the latter, as the affair of the Mother of God was the pretext of the former. Here again the facts are simple. They become terrible and cruel when distorted.

At nine o'clock on the evening of 4 Prairial a young girl, described by Vilate as " beautiful and well born," presented herself at the Duplays' house, Rue Saint-Honoré. There she saw Citizeness Duplay, the eldest daughter, whom she asked to show her where Robespierre lodged. Barras has spoken of the strict guard which Cornélie and her family kept over their guest. We know, too, that it was one of the grievances which Charlotte Robespierre had against the Duplays. We need not be aston-



AIMÉE CÉCILE RENAULT
(Executed 1794)

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ished, therefore, to find that Cornélie instantly refused the visitor permission to enter. She answered that Robespierre was not there; upon which the unknown lady "showed temper, and replied insolently that it was very astonishing that he was not in his room, being a public functionary, whose duty it was to reply to the questions of anyone calling on him." At this strange answer, Citizens Didier and Boulanger, present at the interview, intervened, and arrested the young girl as a suspect, and conducted her to the Committee of General Safety, close by, at Brienne's house.

Vouland, Dubarran, Amar, David, Moyse, Bayle, Lavicomterie, Lacoste, Louis (of Lower Rhine), and even Vadier, were at the meeting. The unknown was immediately conducted to their presence and questioned. She gave her name as Aimée-Cécile Renault, aged twenty, living at her father's, a stationer in the Rue Lanterne, near to that of the Marmousets, in the City ward. Why did she go to Robespierre's? To see him. Then, she knew him? No, "since I asked to make his acquaintance." Why did she wish to know him? "To see if he pleased me." Not another word would she say, begging them not to question her further. Meanwhile she was searched, and two knives

were found on her. Before going to Duplay's she had left a parcel at Citizen Payen's, a coffee-house keeper. The parcel was brought ; it was found to contain some feminine clothes. Questioned as to why she had provided herself with these different things, she answered that she expected to be taken to the place, where there was no doubt she would be taken, and she would be pleased to have a change of linen with her. "What place?" "Prison, and from thence to the guillotine." She was sent in the first place to the Conciergerie.

Cécile Renault's attack, if her visit can be so described, came immediately after that of a man called Admiral, of which Collot d'Herbois was the victim, on the night of 3-4 Prairial. This individual had hidden himself on the staircase of the house inhabited by the former actor, and on his return had fired two pistol-shots at him. Disarmed and instantly arrested, but not before seriously wounding Sieur Geffroy, who had gone to Collot's assistance, Admiral was conducted to the Le Peletier station, and from there to the Conciergerie, where he was imprisoned.

The result of these two cases was the arrest of a considerable number of individuals connected with Admiral. Among them sus-

pects were found connected with Baron de Batz, the silly Royalist conspirator, who had found means of falling into the hands of the police.

As to Cécile Renault, her act brought about the arrest of her father, her aunt, and her brothers. It came to be known as the Conspiracy of the Foreigners, and by decree of the Convention, 26 Prairial, reported by Élie Lacoste, all were sent for judgment to the Revolutionary Tribunal, who condemned the whole batch to death on 29 Prairial. The execution was carried out with unusual pomp. All the condemned were arrayed in red shirts as "assassins of national representation," and conducted to the Barrière-du-Trône-Renversé in carts, surrounded by squadrons of the National Guards and police, preceded and followed by cannon, with soldiers carrying lighted match. This sacrifice of fifty-four heads took place because a little girl, without any particular reason, had presented herself at Robespierre's house with two little knives in her pocket.

The emotion caused by these attempts against Collot d'Herbois and Robespierre was very great. "The people seem vastly affected by the attempts against the representatives, Robe-

sierre and Collot d'Herbois. They complain that the punishments inflicted on the monsters Ladmiral and Regnaud are too mild for such crimes." So speaks a police report of 8 Prairial. The same day Daillet, of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Arras, wrote to Maximilien begging him to take more serious precautions for the future. "This is an opportunity," he says, "to reproach you for your usual imprudence." And he continues with a certain vehemence :

"Why did Liberty not lose her most constant defender on that day ? If you had gone out with a companion, whom you usually leave behind when the fancy takes you to run off, that monster would have struck at you before he could offer any assistance. Do not say that your fate would have been worthy of envy, since you would have died for your country ; the country has lost too many virtuous men already. A man of worth should never die, and when we have replaced the most hideous of systems by the practice of republican virtues and love of the Divinity, at least let those who have proclaimed these eternal truths, and whose lives have never belied them, be there to set the example. Therefore, my friend, be more cautious than ever ; let your room be inacces-

sible to any but your friends, and be not afraid lest such conduct be attributed to morbidness or haughtiness—it is justified by this intended attack ; and is not there always the pen to make oneself heard ?”

A little more, and Daillet would have accused the Duplays of a want of caution. The previous evening Robespierre had received another letter, coming from the artists of the Théâtre de l'Égalité :

“ Let artists, always grateful for the services you have rendered our common mother, our country, assure you of the deep grief we suffered at hearing the news of your assassination ; you will without difficulty realize the profound joy which succeeded that moment of fear, when we heard that Providence, protector of your happy destiny, so necessary to the happiness of the republic, had preserved you from their parricidal hands. Accept this feeble tribute of our gratitude, and be assured that not one of us but would feel happy to serve as a shield if the least danger seemed to threaten you again.

“ Long live the republic and its defenders !
(We thought it was not necessary to change the style of this, having to express to you the same

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sentiments as we must express to your colleague
Collot.)

“The members appointed by the artists :

“ ARMAND VERTEUIL, JULIEN, BONNET-
BONNEVILLE, AMIEL, DIDELOT, GAL-
LET, WAZELLES, LA MOTTE, DUBLIN,
COURDE.”

This document was suppressed by Courtois.
Why ? What new evidence did it give in favour
of the great vanquished hero ? One word—one
word only—written in Robespierre’s hand in the
margin ; that word was “ *Flatterers.*”

But, besides those who offered congratula-
tions, how many were there who accused him of
the murder of the fifty-four victims, sacrificed
to safeguard his life ! What, spill so much blood
to punish what Courtois calls “ the curious be-
haviour of the little Renault ” ! So many deaths
to avenge a criminal threat against one life !

In this natural feeling of reprobation, en-
hanced by the tragical setting of the execution,
we immediately recognize the hand of the Com-
mittee of General Safety and the Committee of
Public Health, which for some time Robespierre
had not frequented, and this is the formal
avowal of his enemies themselves. Thus we see
horror succeed ridicule. Here again Robe-

spierre guessed the terrible, the odious tactics, calumny serving hatred. With what indignation does he not denounce it in his speech of 8 Thermidor! Is he not truly alluding to the red shirts, and to these only, when he cries: "Apostate men propagated this system [calumny] daily in public places; there were some at the sittings of the Revolutionary Tribunal; and in the places where the enemies of our country expiated their misdeeds they said: 'Here are some condemned wretches; who is the cause? Robespierre!'" And in what bitter and prophetic tones he defends himself: "Cowards! They wished to bring me to the grave with ignominy. And I should have left on earth nothing but the memory of a tyrant." Alas! to how many has he not left that memory!

He might be reproached for not having intervened in the Cécile Renault case, as he did in that of Théot, whom he thus saved from the guillotine. We must observe, therefore, that no counter-revolutionary was implicated in the Théot case; the accused were a band of mad mystics, having no connection whatever with politics. There was no resemblance with the Conspiracy of the Foreigners; in the latter case the accused were real conspirators, implicated in de Batz's plots—a fact which was amply proved,

and to which they confessed. If he had attempted to save them from the sentence imposed by the Revolutionary Tribunal, with what severity would Robespierre have been judged ! The charge of favouring the counter-revolution would certainly have been brought against him, and rightly. Comprised among the group of suspects and guilty, how could he save Cécile Renault and her relations ? This must be said : these people were innocent, compromised by the conduct of the young girl, and made responsible for this conduct by the Committee of Public Safety. We must remark here that the Incorruptible was a stranger to all these proceedings. Vadier and his colleagues conducted them. We know why and how. It was all done without Robespierre's knowledge ; as we have already said, he refrained from appearing at the meetings, from taking part in the debates of his colleagues, whose hostility, bad faith, and desire to shake off the yoke of his tyrannical virtue, he well guessed. His intervention in the affair would have caused an outcry among the rabble, who were preparing the final blow for the day of Thermidor, close at hand.

And yet Robespierre did intervene in the Renault affair. How ? It is impossible to answer the question with certitude, but the fact

itself is certain. Cécile Renault had two brothers: the eldest, aged thirty-two, was arrested at his father's house in Paris; the other was with the army. Sent to Paris, where he arrived after the bloody night of the 29th, guilty on the same ground as his father, his uncle, and his aunt, of his sister's crime, he waited at Sainte-Pélagie for his trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal. While waiting he adopted the courageous and audacious plan of writing to Robespierre to implore his mercy. The letter is little known, and yet what an important piece of evidence it is in this case, which has been so tragically distorted!—

“ LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY, OR DEATH !

“ 16 *Messidor, year II. of the French Republic, one, indivisible, imperishable. Renault, Quartermaster of the 2nd Battalion of Paris, to Citizen Robespierre, representative of the people.*

“ CITIZEN !—Had I been an accomplice of her who attempted to pierce your heart, I should have forestalled the vengeance of the law, since I heard of the crime and was distressed by it before my arrest. But, calm in my innocence, I have only to blush at being brother to her who

would have assassinated one of the best friends of our country, while I only desired to destroy her enemies. What a contrast ! But I am none the less unfortunate.

“Imprisoned, no doubt, as a suspect, have I not to fear a long detention ? Have I not to fear being deprived for a long time from sharing the glory of my brothers-at-arms, and of being deprived of the honour of serving my country at a moment when she summons all her children to her defence ? These reflections afflict and overwhelm me. But what does it mean ? Are not crimes a personal matter ? Are the innocent to be punished because they are near relatives of the guilty ? I cannot believe it ; the just man has his rights, but who will make mine heard ? Alone, abandoned, with no support other than the feeble one of my innocence, to whom shall I turn ? To you, Robespierre—to you, who must hold all my race in abhorrence, but for your generosity. Help me to pass the effacing sponge of virtue over a picture which dishonours patriotism. Be my counsel ; you are capable of this sublime effort. I will furnish you with the necessary material for my defence ; this is it : my moral and political conduct, upon which I do not fear the most scrupulous investigation ; the constant zeal with which I

have served my country against her enemies ; the favourable reports which I have always received from all my corps ; the horror and grief which I felt and showed when I learnt, before being arrested, of the crime and its author ; and finally my youth, which gives me promise of long years in which to serve my country with glory. Does your great heart need more in order to perform a beautiful deed, and to cause me to be sent back to my post, where, and during the whole of my life, in remembering your virtue, you will be the idol of my gratitude.

“ Salutations and fraternity.

“ RENAULT.”

“ Be my counsel,” cried the prisoner ; but he never came before the Tribunal ; he was liberated 1 Fructidor, year II. At that date the Thermidorians could lay claim to having saved him.

At that time they were busy defaming the sister, declaring her to be Robespierre’s mistress. If Cécile had been guillotined, it was because she worried Maximilien with her love. This Sardanapalus rid himself of his burdensome conquests by sending them “ to play hot cockles ” or to “ poke their heads through the skylight,” as Vadier says.

Even on the morrow of 10 Thermidor the

accusation was already spread broadcast, being one of the pamphlets scattered through the streets, written in large letters on rough paper—a joint defamation of the man who had died the previous day, and of the girl who suffered on 29 Prairial.

“Now that fear of the execrable tyrant,” ran the pamphlet, “of whom France has been purged, no longer holds Truth fettered by injustice, she comes forward on all sides with revelations which daily add new motives for the profound horror which merely the name of this monster inspires.

“The fate of the young girl *Renault* will be remembered : she was brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal with her brother and an old aunt. The girl was charged with an attempt to assassinate Robespierre, the others with being her accomplices. We are now assured that this was another of those atrocious crimes by which this modern *Catilina* hoped to endear himself to the people whom he betrayed.

“The girl Renault, we hear, far from wishing to kill Robespierre, was desperately in love with him, and had been abandoned by him after they had lived together intimately. Unable to bear this neglect, she besieged Robespierre’s house, complained of his infidelity, and was

always rebuffed. Tired of her importunity, Robespierre thought to rid himself of her by a refinement of villainy worthy of him. After sacrificing her to his infamous pleasures, he resolved to sacrifice her to his reputation. He denounced her as having attempted to assassinate him ; her unfortunate family were comprised in the accusation. The whole family suffered on the scaffold, and the monster triumphantly congratulated himself, and planned new crimes, which at last delivered humanity of him."

To those who have followed us to this point, it is not necessary to point out the puerility of this calumny. The traces of the Thermidorians are apparent in this accusation against Robespierre, who would give proof of the value of his own head by cutting off fifty-four heads. These are the very tactics of the group of the Committee of General Safety. By making Cécile Maximilien's mistress, they clumsily disguised their plans, but the malicious cloak is sewn with red thread.

But in this childishly criminal attempt cannot one trace Robespierre's influence on women ? True, this one looks on him as a tyrant, and it is to see " of what stuff a tyrant is made " that she comes to his house. What was her motive ? Was she moved by nervous

mysticism similar to Charlotte Corday's obsession, or was it innocent madness? Both suppositions are possible. It appears, over and above her replies on 4 Prairial, that Cécile Renault was not in possession of all her faculties. A sweet, simple, not particularly dangerous mad woman, she might be classed among the *illuminati*. The only crime she can be accused of is that of being the innocent cause of that great lake of blood of 29 Prairial towards which Robespierre was hustled, and into which he slipped and fell.

VIII

ÉMILIE DE SAINTE-AMARANTHE

THE execution of the Red Shirts brought to the scaffold two women whose names are connected with the fable of Robespierre's debauchery—Mme. de Sainte-Amaranthe and her daughter. Not content with making the Incorruptible bring his cast-off mistress, Cécile Renault, to the guillotine, the Thermidorians make him the executioner of a dangerous one, Émilie de Sainte-Amaranthe. 29 Prairial saw two other young women butchered—the actress Grandmaison, aged twenty-seven, and her servant, Nicole Bouchard, aged eighteen. It would have cost the executioners of 9 Thermidor nothing to add these two to the harem of the Sardanapalus of Artois. They omitted to do so. Why? Was it modesty or oversight? They have bequeathed the task to some future Lenôtre. A batch of Robespierre's mistresses—what an enticing theme to be enlarged on by *Le Temps* or the *Lectures pour Tous*.

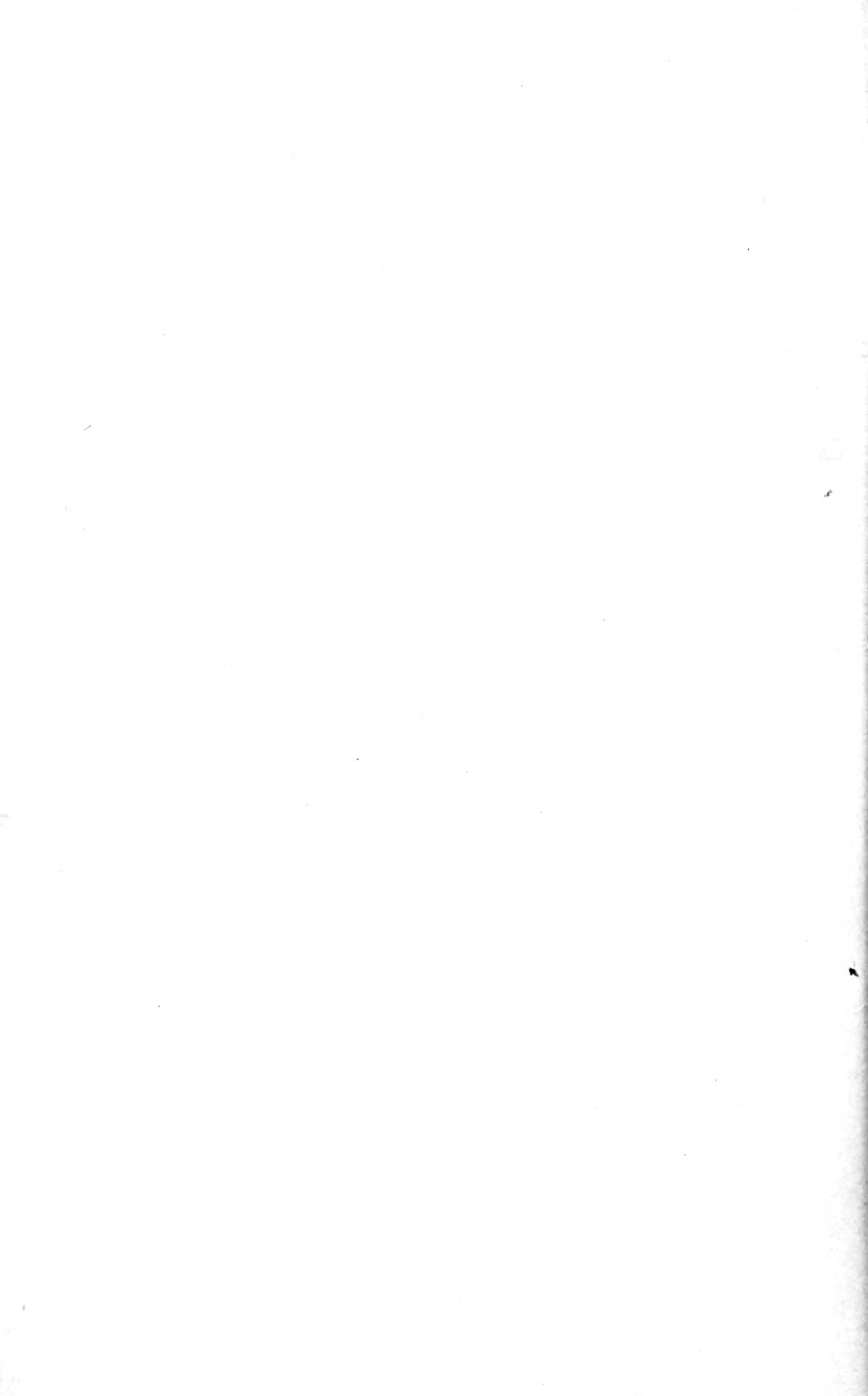
But although the Cécile Renault story has been deliberately rejected even by those historians who are the most bitter opponents of Maximilien, that of Émilie de Sainte-Amaranthe has been received with less caution. The fable is generally accepted as truth. To confront the lamb with the tiger, to portray the former as a mutilated sacrifice, what romancer who has the emotions of his provincial audience in view could resist it? Also they have not failed us. We have described elsewhere what the Sainte-Amaranthe family was, and from what questionable sources they derived their income. The mother had given her daughter an example of gallantry which the latter lost no time in imitating. Lovers and dupes elbowed each other in the gambling saloon they kept in the Palais - Égalité—sharpers like Chabot, who had come for the supper and small profits; lovers like Hérault de Séchelles, thinking of nothing but that “stay on” which pertains to the realm of dalliance. Hérault de Séchelles had been the mother’s lover. “In spite of my faults, she it was who held me longer than any other,” he says. In truth, the “longer” was of sufficiently short duration.

Before the Revolution of May her drawing-



DANTON

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room was open to the Girondins, afterwards to the Dantonists. On 11 Germinal, Saint-Just appearing at the bar of the Convention to denounce Danton's conspiracy, exclaims :

“At that time [1793] Danton frequently dined in the Rue Grange-Batelière, with some English people ; he dined with Guzman, a Spaniard, three times a week, and with the infamous Sainte-Amaranthe, son of Sartine and Lacroix. It was there that some of the dinners at 100 crowns per head were given.”

The pretext upon which the Sainte-Amaranthe family were brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal has been a matter for conjecture. Saint-Just has supplied the pretext. There can be no mistake about it. That infamous, murderous drawing-room, as Fouquier-Tinville calls it, was the rendezvous of stock-jobbers and gamblers ; conspiracies were planned there. A friend of de Sainte-Amaranthe, the actor Fleury, confesses that the ladies gave shelter even to refractory priests. This was a crime against the laws of the Revolution. But there was certainly another reason—Mme. de Sainte-Amaranthe's interest in the *Compagnie des Indes*. The part Chabot played in that swindle is known, while Chabot was a frequenter of the gambling saloon.

Was anything else needed to awaken suspicion ?

Apparently this was all too simple for the post-Thermidor historians. They had to find a more subtle pretext. It was found—Robespierre was in love with Émilie.

Frankly, the find, though ingenious, is none the less paltry. To present to us Robespierre, always so eager to preserve the moral dignity of his life, willingly depriving himself of all public amusements, so cheerfully domestic—to present him to us in this drawing-room of ill-fame, frequented by swindlers, gamblers, and gallants, is to invent a tale lacking even a semblance of truth. Courageously and naïvely it was invented.

According to Fleury, a certain Trial, an actor — we know Robespierre's contempt for the profession — introduced the Incorruptible into this questionable circle. Robespierre instantly fell in love with Émilie.

“He divested himself of his borrowed solemnity, of his redoubtable airs—that is to say, he loved, not as a true Robespierre, but as a true Céladon.”

Thereupon Fleury guides this unexpected Céladon into the Country of Tenderness. He presents him to us humbling himself, caressing

a dress, picking up a fan, kissing the tips of a glove, passing love-letters. "He ran through the whole gamut of tenderness, and visited *the land of gallantry* with an exactitude and zeal worthy of a Scudéry ; he gallantly attempted to outstay his rivals and to cheat the husband. Imagine it—Robespierre playing the part of a Sganarelle !" Fleury alone could imagine that, especially as he seems to ignore that the sweet Émilie had not waited Robespierre's coming to rank her husband in that category of persons whom a satirical list of the times calls "the most numerous of the kingdom."

Naturally, says Fleury, unconsciously doing him justice, Mme. de Sainte-Amaranthe wished to gain something from this passion. She saw herself and family lost, says Fleury. Why ? Had she, then, some weight on her conscience ? If she was lost, it was not, then, Robespierre's fault, since she admitted his friendship. Fleury's fable becomes somewhat incoherent here, but to insist further would deprive us from quoting new passages, which would be a pity. This is how the actor explains the catastrophe that befell the Sainte-Amaranthe ladies. The passage is important, and what a savour it has !

"After the first buds, after the first lilacs,

as we say in Paris, the new sybarite's sensuality was profoundly excited. He was, as we know, a great lover of roses, of wreaths, of perfumes. He wished to drink in the sweet air of the country, to crown himself with flowers under fresh canopies, to tender his cup to his charmer, to fill and empty it with her, hoping that this joint intoxication would lead to an intoxication of another kind, which, to speak frankly, seemed to him to be much delayed.

“Robespierre planned his victory and arranged his audience at Maisons, some miles from Paris. He drank, he became tender; he drank again, and his dream divided itself into two parts. He strayed from love, but spoke of his high aims; he drank too much, his cool brain became heated, his tongue gave play to the fulness of his thoughts; he forgot love, and was lost in his ambitious plans—in a word, he told his secrets and the secrets of his adherents.”

These secrets the well-informed Fleury keeps jealously to himself, which seems wrong. He could have overwhelmed the tiger—he refuses to do so. Oh, generous Fleury!

But this is merely the prologue of a tragedy in three acts. Here is the second:

“ On the morrow a man came to Robespierre—a man whose repentance led him to suicide, a man who had fallen more than any other under the influence of Robespierre’s mesmeric wand, a poor wretch whom I have seen weeping tears of blood, beating the ground with his forehead, and giving vent to cries which pierced my soul; a friend who sought me more often during his hour of remorse than during the time of his pleasures and successes, and who could scarcely bear the weight of what he called his crime for two years, and what I, considering his expiation and the thousand proofs of honour given before and after those terrible days—what I would call, I say, fascination, error, ecstasy, madness even, if one wishes—this man upon whom a priest would have tried exorcism, and a doctor douches, and who punished himself with opium—this man on the morrow of the feast came to Robespierre.”

And here is the great scene :

The tribune was in a sombre mood; he knew the excesses into which he had fallen, and if sobriety had not been a natural virtue in him he would have practised it for convenience’ sake. He was therefore sombre, because he was displeased with his state of health and ashamed of his weakness.

“What have you done, Robespierre ? what have you done ?” he cried without preamble.

“What ! what ! what are you speaking of ? Is the country in danger ?”

“She is lost, and with her the most eminent of her men.”

Robespierre felt that the title applied to himself, and rose :

“Explain yourself ; what is this phantasmagoria ?”

“I would it were so.”

“Well ?”

“Last night you were one of us, you were of our mind !”

“Mind ! do you mean, then, that I am out of my mind ?”

Saying this, Robespierre covered his face with his hands, his usually upright figure was bent, the nervous movement, which he disguised more or less successfully, and which could be noticed in shoulders and head, now became so marked that he shook as though with ague. He had a vague recollection of the previous night ; he was tortured. The other man, fearing a nervous attack, hesitated a minute ; but Robespierre, pulling himself together as it were, caught hold of him by the coat lapels, clung to him like a sick man to a doctor, hoping

for a denial, or even begging to be told a lie.

“ Well ?” he cried.

“ Well,” replied the other abruptly, and standing close to him, measuring for the first time his idol’s height, “ well, you have revealed your secret.”

“ I have revealed ?”

“ Several names. Several names,” repeated the tribune, still clinging to him, his words sounding like a mere echo. “ The names of those whom you desire to bring to justice.”

“ I named ?”

“ Those who weigh your power !” cried the other forcibly in order to rouse him. And seeing that he was not successful, “ And before women !” he added with an air of pity.

“ Those women love me.”

“ They will talk.”

“ They love me.”

“ Go and give that as an excuse to the Jacobins.”

Brave words, are they not ? Also Robespierre could not resist them, and the audacious Trial, catching hold of him, “ unclenched his hands from his coat lapels with a certain amount of brutality, and pushed him into an armchair, where he remained in thought.”

Two days later the Sainte-Amaranthe family was arrested. No one doubted but that the order came from Robespierre. This is how such a man ended his love affairs.

The son of Le Bas thought it necessary later to deny this fable :

"My uncle, M. Duplay," he writes, "whose evidence cannot be rejected, solemnly assured me that Robespierre never had any connection with that woman, whom he looked upon as an intriguer of more than questionable morals. He added that Trial, who is supposed to have taken him to her house, was not, as has been reported, one of Robespierre's friends; my mother [Le Bas's wife, the carpenter Duplay's daughter] also declares that she never saw him at her father's house."

Was not this a superfluous honour to pay Fleury and his imitators ?

The facts themselves reveal the truth of the matter. It is impossible for Robespierre to have had any hand in it. The Sainte-Amaranthe ladies were sent for trial to the Revolutionary Tribunal by a decree of the Convention. This decree was issued, as we have seen when speaking of Cécile Renault, upon the proposal of Élie Lacoste, member of the Committee of General Safety. The antagonism

caused during Prairial by the case of the Mother of God, between Robespierre and the Committee, proves that he would be a stranger to the inquiry into the Conspiracy of the Stranger. Besides which, he was at the time absent from the Committee of Public Health, far away from public matters, absorbed in preparing the great speech of 8 Thermidor. But shall such a detail deter one ? To admit the truth of these facts would condemn the romance. And for love of a romance, and to safeguard the reader's interest, let the romance win. But why not, then, hold by chivalry and the Round Table ?

IX

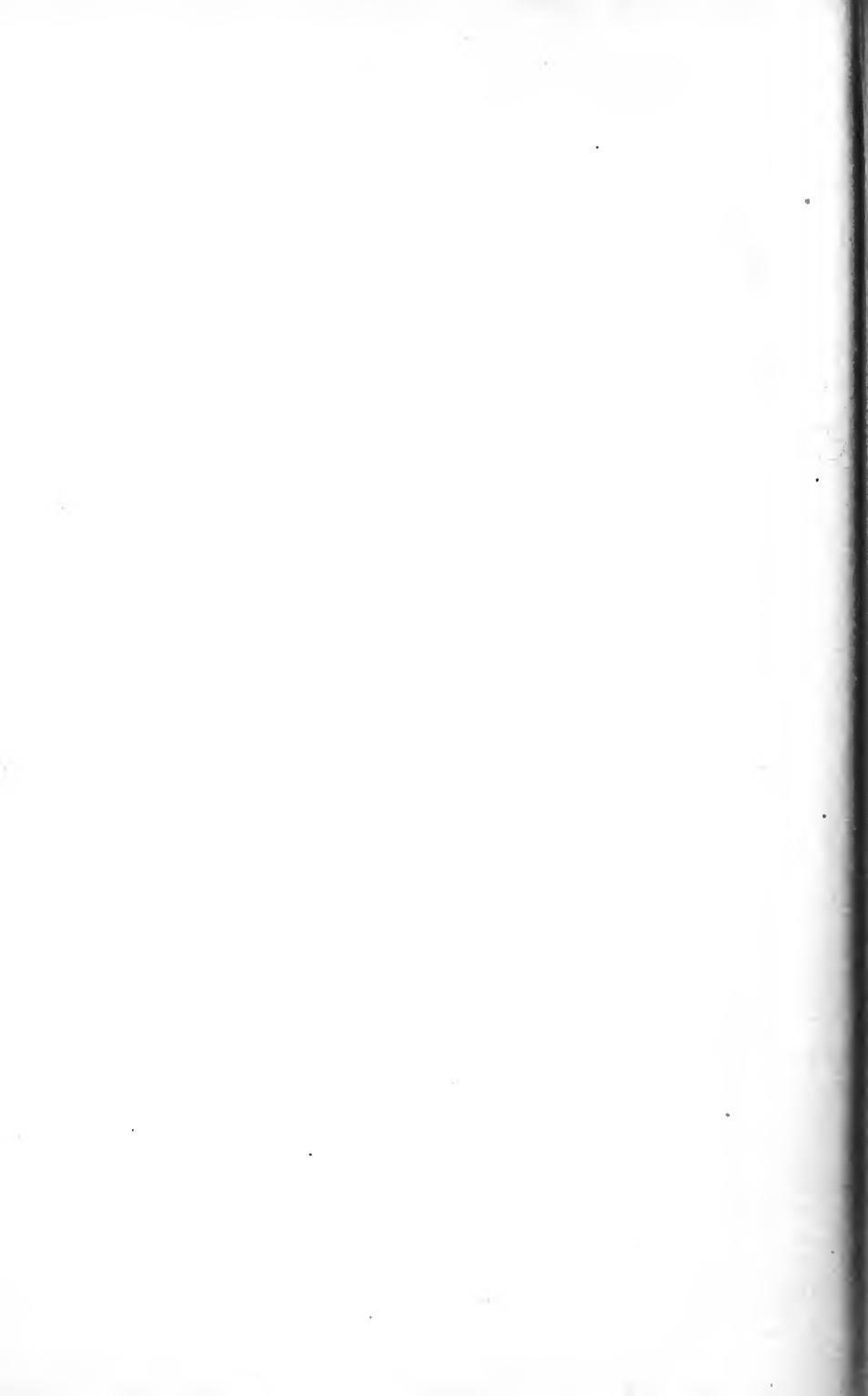
CHOICE BETWEEN FREE AND CONJUGAL LOVE

FREED from the tales of Thermidor, the personality of Robespierre appears now as an exceptional one. He is exceptional through the unity of his life, exceptional on account of his habits and his morality. To which of the men of 1793 and 1794 can we compare him? The latter, according to M. de Goncourt, were by no means chaste, but they remained unmarried. But what kind of celibacy was theirs? Barère had a pleasure-house at Clichy, where the famous nocturnal scenes of the gardens of Versailles and of the Petit Trianon were organized. And old Vadier himself was not "a stranger to the game of love." As for Barras, Fréron, Tallien, and several others, it is well known what use they made of their proconsular power in their respective departments. The beautiful girls of Marseilles, Toulon, and Bordeaux, could have told at what price these



FOUCHÉ

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representatives of the Revolutionary Government sold their protection. They were fond of pleasure, those men of the Terror; they were artists and æsthetes, displaying grace in their condemnation, and elegance in wielding the knife.

“However corrupt the morals of a period,” writes an amiable contemporary author, “there is always someone who manages to escape from the contagion of vice, and to attach himself to virtue.” This applies not only to Robespierre, but also to many other members of the Convention. History knows them as feverish, tumultuous, theatrical, gaunt figures draped in their civic heroism, thundering against tyranny and execrating the despots of Europe. But once descended from the platform, we find them in the bosom of their families, in the peaceful atmosphere of their homes, dandling their children on their knees. The private lives of the men of the Terror—even of those who were instrumental in preparing it—are not without an idyllic corner. We need only think of Danton, of Billaud-Varenne, who led a very happy life with a German woman named Angelica Doye. Fouché was married to the daughter of a procurator of Nantes, and declared her to be “a very model of her sex.” And what

about Camille Desmoulins, the model of tender grace and attachment? Think of Elizabeth Duplay, the widow of Le Bas, of Lebon, and of many other husbands and fathers who seemed to be anything but born tigers.

Robespierre had to choose between the libertine love of a Barras or the conjugal Eros of a Desmoulins. We know what he had chosen. Voluntarily he had cut himself off from the community of pleasure, from the participation of voluptuousness. Did he think himself above human pleasures? Certainly not; but he thought it impossible to bring his work to a successful issue whilst indulging in pleasures. Where he was wrong was to have imagined that his ideal was compatible with his period. "If Robespierre was sincere," says Baudot, "he ought to have lived in Thebaïd. An alliance between virtue, morality, and politics, is almost impossible.

"Robespierre, you have never stolen any money, you have never incurred debts, you have never possessed women, you are always decently dressed, and you have never been drunk; Robespierre, you are disgracefully honest." Such are the words put into the mouth of Danton by a German playwright. Robespierre made a mistake in dreaming of a possi-

bility of moral cleanliness ; he dreamt of Sparta and of Lacedæmonia, but he was cruelly deceived.

But if he dreamt of such an ideal, he never for a moment intended to impose it upon the country. He never thought of changing France into a cenobitic desert. He did not even, as some pretended, despise pleasure. To believe such an assertion one would have to leave aside his sentimental youth and adolescence, his love-letters—disbelieve what his sister Charlotte and the widow Le Bas have written of him. Robespierre loved pleasure, but it was not the gross and vulgar enjoyment of despicable youth. Respectful of his dignity, he was politely reserved and tender in his enjoyment. He had never abdicated his politeness, and he found lewdness and disorderly conduct unnecessary for the triumph of his political ideas. That is why he has been accused of a tendency to tyranny, as if dignity and politeness constituted the road leading to autocratic power and despotism. Before thinking of love he first thought of his duty and of his task. He preferred the country to his pleasures, liberty to his domestic hearth. “He was disgustingly honest.” Fouché was less honest and subsequently became Duke of Otranto, Barras a

member of the Directory, and Tallien a police spy. Robespierre remained poor, and after his death they found 460 francs in his possession ; practically the same amount was realized from the sale of the belongings which Saint-Just had left.

It was their poverty and their faith in an ideal of virtue which they expiated on 10 Thermidor. " Robespierre dead, the heroic age was at an end." France is marching towards the Directory, and it was perhaps best for these austere men, Robespierre and Saint-Just, to have been put to death on the eve of the fall. It was best that the jolting carts had dragged them to the Place de la Révolution, because they were not made for the times which were to follow. Paris could now hoot these condemned heroes, hoot them in their carts, hoot them even when they were dead, because the republic had fallen with them. He had nothing to ask from astonished and prostrated posterity, this Robespierre, who, with smashed jaw, livid, and bleeding, stood erect facing the storm of vociferations and maledictions.

What did he care for the insult of the moment when he foresaw the future paying him a tribute ? He had sinned, but there was majesty and greatness in his expiation. He saw the many-headed, waving crowd, he read the furious



FRANÇOIS HENRIOT
(Executed with Robespierre)

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hatred in the eyes of this hostile mob, but he remained unmoved. His eyelids half closed, he was dreaming of his destiny, of the sacrifice of his person on the altar of his country. He remembered fragments of the Dialogue of Sylla and Eucrates which had remained open on his table. He heard the prophetic words spoken by Montesquieu in 1748. And whilst the carts are moving, and the clamour of the multitude, shouts, and insults, are greeting the vanquished, he is repeating these words: "The blood I have shed has enabled me to carry out the greatest of my actions. Had I governed the Romans with gentleness, no wonder that a caprice, ennui, or disgust, should have made me abdicate my power; but I have abandoned the dictatorship in a moment when everybody believed that the dictatorship was my sole refuge. I appeared among the Romans, a citizen among citizens, and I dared to say unto them: 'I am ready to render you account of all the blood I have shed for the republic; I shall answer all those who will come to me to claim a father, a son, or a brother'—and all the Romans were silent." And whilst ascending the slimy steps of the guillotine the man of Thermidor felt that his conscience was elevated enough to absolve his judges.



APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

BAPTISMAL CERTIFICATES OF CHARLOTTE, HENRIETTE, AND AUGUSTIN ROBESPIERRE

THE baptismal certificate of Maximilien Robespierre, as we have already said, has often been published. The certificates of the other children of M. de Robespierre are unknown. The reader will find them, farther on, copied from the originals in the Registrar's office at Arras.

First comes the entry of Charlotte Robespierre :

“ This day, the 8th of February of the year 1760, we, Parish Priest of the Parish of Saint-Étienne des Ville and of the Diocese of Arras, have administered the rites of Baptism to a girl born about half-past two in the afternoon in this said parish, in lawful wedlock, of Master Maximilien-Barthélemy-François de Robespierre, barrister in the Provincial Council of Artois, and of the Dame Jacqueline-Marguerite Carraut, her father and mother, who was baptized privately by us, the Parish Priest, the day after her birth, 6th of the same month and year as above, with the permission of the bishopric dated the same day, signed le Roux, Vicar-General, and lower down by regulation Péchena. The godfather was Master Charles-Antoine de Gouve, King's Counsellor, and purveyor of the town and city of Arras, subdelegate of the Governor of Flanders and Artois in the Department of Arras, of the Parish of Saint-Jean in Ronville ; and the godmother Dame Marie-

Dominique Poiteau, widow of M. François Isambart, of his lifetime purveyor to the said Provincial Council of Artois, of the Parish of Saint-Aubert ; who gave her the name of Marie-Marguerite-Charlotte, and signed the certificate with us, the Parish Priest, in the presence of the father, the day and year aforesaid. The child was born on the 5th.

“GOUVE DE MARIE-DOMINIQUE POITEAU.

DEROBESPIERRE.

WILLART, *Parish Priest of Saint-Étienne.*”

Charlotte survived the events of Thermidor forty years. Her end was dark and unknown. Under the name of Mme. Carraut, she lived with the family Mathon, Rue de la Fontaine. Her room was poorly furnished with an old chest of drawers, a mahogany bedstead with two mattresses, two small tables—one of mahogany, the other of walnut. A lithograph portrait of Maximilien hung on the wall. Two other portraits decorated another wall : those of Robespierre and Laponneraye, who was the first to essay the rehabilitation of the great Jacobin. Charlotte's wardrobe was very modest. At her death there were only a dozen worn chemises, an old dress of *gros de Naples*, and three linen dresses. The whole—furniture, effects, and ornaments—was sold for 331 francs. Charlotte died on August 1, 1834, and was buried two days later in the Mont Parnasse Cemetery, in a grave—of temporary allotment. This allotment expired in 1840 ; and as no one came forward to renew it, Charlotte's bones were removed to the Catacombs. She left the following will, published by Laponneraye:

“I, Marie Marguerite Charlotte Robespierre, the undersigned, enjoying all my intellectual faculties, wishing, before paying to Nature the debt which all mortals owe her, to make my sentiments known

towards the memory of my elder brother, declare that I always knew him for a virtuous man. I protest against all the letters contrary to his honour which have been attributed to me. Wishing also to dispose of those things which I may leave at my decease, I name Mlle. Reine-Louise-Victoire Mathon as my sole heiress, by whom I desire that everything that I shall leave may be collected as her sole property.

“In faith whereof, made and written by my hand, at Paris, February 6, 1828.

“ROBESPIERRE.”

The original of this will, one half-page in folio, was sold in a sale of autographs in 1862. It is one of the rare autograph pieces of Charlotte which came to the hammer.

The life of the second sister of Maximilien was shorter. As already said, she was carried away by a lingering illness when nineteen years old. She was born December 28, 1761. Here is her baptismal register :

“This twenty-eighth day of December, 1761. We, Parish Priest of Saint-Étienne, of the City and Diocese of Arras, have baptized a daughter born the same day in the Parish of Saint-Étienne, towards six o'clock in the morning, in lawful wedlock, of Master Maximilien-Barthélemy-François de Robespierre, barrister in the Provincial Council of Artois, and of Dame Jacqueline-Marguerite Carraut, father and mother, both of our parish. The godfather was M. Jacque-François Carraut, wholesale master brewer in the Parish of Saint-Jean in Ronville, maternal grandfather of the child; and the godmother Dame Marie-Marguerite-Françoise Poiteau, wife of Master Maximilien de Robespierre, barrister in the said Provincial and Upper Council of Artois, of the Parish of Saint-Aubert, paternal grand-

father of the said infant ; who gave her the name of Henriette-Eulalie-Françoise, and who signed with us, the Parish Priest, the same deed, as well as the father, who was here present at the said Arras the day and month aforesaid.

“ JACQUE FRANÇOIS CARRAUT.

POITEAU DE ROBESPIERRE.

DE ROBESPIERRE.

WILLART, *Parish Priest of Saint-Étienne.*”

This last paper relates to Augustin-Bon, whose fate and the part he played in the tragedy of 9 Thermidor are already known to our readers.

“ This twenty-second day of January in the year 1763, we, Parish Priest of Saint-Étienne, of the City and Diocese of Arras, have baptized a boy born the day before the 21st of the same month and year as aforesaid, about two o'clock in the afternoon, in the said parish, in lawful wedlock, of Master Maximilien-Barthélemy-François de Robespierre, barrister in the Provincial Council of Artois, and of Dame Jacqueline-Marguerite Carraut, father and mother, both of our parish. The godfather was M. Augustin-Isidore Carraut, merchant of the Parish of Saint-Jean in Ronville, maternal uncle of the infant; and the godmother Damsel Marguerite - Alexandrine - Eléonore - Eulalie de Robespierre, of the Parish of Saint-Aubert, paternal aunt of the said infant ; who named him Augustin-Bon-Joseph, and who signed with us, the Parish Priest, the same register, as well as the father here present, day, month, and year, aforesaid.

“ CARRAUT.

EULALIE DE ROBESPIERRE.

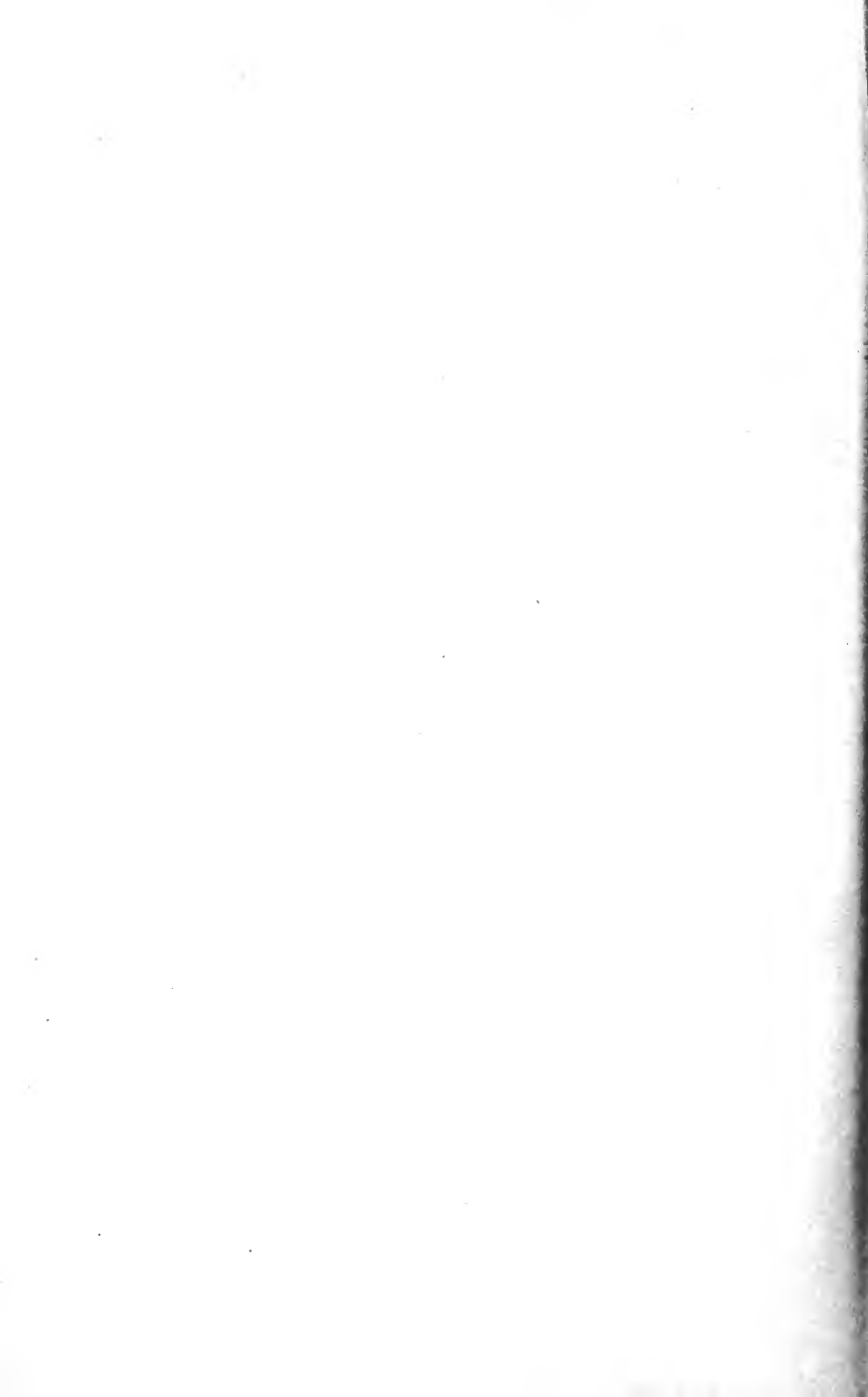
DEROBESPIERRE.

WILLART, *Parish Priest of Saint-Étienne.*”



MADAME TALLIEN

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APPENDIX II

A DRINKING SONG OF ROBESPIERRE'S

IN order to prove the authenticity of the "Mémoires" which he published under the name of Robespierre, Charles Reybaud added to his compilation the manuscript of a bacchic poem by Maximilien, entitled "La Coupe Vuide" (The Empty Cup). He gave two verses in facsimile, hoping—thanks to them—to make the remainder of his publication pass muster. We thank him for preserving this poem for us. It was under the number 327 in the important Sensier Collection, then figured as No. 1153 in the inventory of the Benjamin Fillon Collection, in which inventory the first four verses are given in facsimile. The manuscript was entered as composed of three small quarto pages. There were twelve verses. Only eleven of them are known. The twelfth remains unpublished, and it is much to be desired that the present possessor should publish this autograph curiosity. We give here these eleven verses, the least known of all Robespierre's poems :

I.

Ye gods, my friends ! what do I see ?
Notorious crime and grim
Of the fair name of Rosatis
The glory would bedim !
Woe ! and whom to blame ?
O scandalous ! O shame !
To speak I hardly dare ;
A blush for you I own ;
As for myself I groan :
My cup, 'tis empty there !

II.

Ho ! Quick, then, fill it to the brim,
 With juice of health to be ;
 Or brave the vengeful wrath of him,
 The God, who gave it thee.
 Ay ! in his rage so grand,
 His own avenging hand
 With it my glass shall break :
 Bacchus, in yonder hall,
 On water-drinkers, all,
 Bends his stern glance : then quake !

III.

The finger on their gloomy brows,
 On all their pallid faces,
 In hateful characters avows
 The evil curse it traces.
 See their demeanour mad,
 Their discourse dismal, sad,
 Their timid, halting gait.
 Their battle song 'gainst wine
 Tells how their cup, like mine,
 Often doth empty wait.

IV.

Who seeks the draught of water cool,—
 You may believe me really,—
 Since time began was but a fool.
 This I avow sincerely.
 Methinks this pedant bold,
 This cynic hard and cold,
 More stupid than I ask.
 O joy,—for which I vouch,—
 Only to go and crouch
 Within an empty cask !

V.

But oh ! how much the more
 Desirable estate,
 The wine-cask being full,
 What bliss were in that fate !

This charming retreat,
This domicile neat,
I'd far rather sing
Than the pomp of a King !

VI.

And when the bold hosts
Of the children of men
Dared to war with the gods
On Olympus,—oh, then !—
The gods without drinking,
All trembling and sinking—
E'en Jove seemed to shrink—
Whilst Bacchus assigned
Vict'ry's palm to mankind;
For man alone knew how to drink.

VII.

O sight most rare on that brave day,
The great god of the Vine,
Calm, god-like, emptying one by one
The bottles filled with wine.
Then flinging them wide
As weapons of war,
As thunderbolts tried,
On mountains afar,
Which tottered and fell
On the children of men.
Thus Bacchus drank deep
A Divine Quaffer then !

VIII.

You who to him pledged your vows,
Vanquished by such deeds as those,
Know to Bacchus' power benign
Mankind owes her flower the rose.
He did her endue
With loveliest hue;
For I heard Momus,
Conversing with Venus,
On a day of late,
The fable relate.

IX.

The rose was pale long ago,
 Less fair and less dear
 To Zephyr, who paid court elsewhere
 To Lily white and clear.
 Till one day Bacchus,
 From the breast of Venus,
 Plucking the pale flower,
 In that selfsame hour,
 In a bowl of wine,
 Did her incarnadine.

X.

From the scratch on Venus' bosom
 (So 'tis said) the red drops flowed,
 And henceforth among the lilies
 Roses crimson twain there glowed,
 And from that very hour
 The rose became Queen-flower,
 For evermore to reign,
 Whilst Venus, Queen of Heaven,
 The coldest gods enslaving,
 Became High Souveraine.

XI.

This song at an end,
 Dear friends, let us drink
 To Ruzé, good friend !
 Now, who would *not* drink ?
 To my friend Carnot,
 To the amiable Cot,
 I drink good gain !
 To you, Fosseux mine,
 This foaming wine
 I shall drink again !

APPENDIX III

DUCIS' LETTER IN FAVOUR OF M^{LE}. LABILLE-GUYARD

WE have spoken somewhere of the part Mme. Labille-Guyard's portrait of Robespierre played in the popularity of the Incorruptible. And for this reason the name of the artist ought not to be forgotten in this sequel to the sketch of the private life of the lawyer of Arras. Before gaining the public approval of her portrait of the Incorruptible, Mme. Labille-Guyard had many a skirmish with criticism and slander. These attacks were particularly violent in 1783, when verses were circulated which wounded her woman's dignity more than her artistic *amour-propre*. To defend her from these attacks, Ducis the poet wrote to the Comtesse d'Angeviller the following remarkable letter :

“MADAME LA COMTESSE,

“You will receive a letter from Mme. Guyard, of the Royal Academy of Painting, in which she begs you to be kind enough to write to M. Lenoir, Lieutenant of Police, so that this magistrate may join with M. de Chanlo, the Governor of the Louvre, to suppress verses not printed, but engraved, which are sold at the door of the *salon*, where Mme. Lebrun, and Mme. Caster are infamously attacked by the most horrible slander. She does not murmur against the criticisms, even unfair ones, of her work, but she cannot endure

that her personal character should be attacked, and her reputation cruelly torn to shreds. She came to me requesting me to ask you at once for a letter from M. le Comte d'Angeviller to M. Lenoir. I fulfil the promise I made to her with pleasure, being convinced that no one in the world hates slander and wickedness more than you do. Thus M. le Comte will perform an action worthy of him and of you, in procuring the prompt suppression of the atrocious verses, which are sold in the Louvre itself, and the punishment of the guilty authors of this infamy. The innocent have recourse to you, Mme. la Comtesse, against persecution ; the imprudent ask for light. My heart is now quiet, and I owe its calm to you.

"I am, with infinite respect and attachment, which will end only with my life, Mme. la Comtesse, your very humble and obedient servant,

"DUCIS."

APPENDIX IV

ROBESPIERRE'S SPEECH AGAINST THE RED CAP

WE have said in what circumstances Robespierre was led to speak out against the wearing of the red cap, in a sitting of the Jacobin Club on March 19, 1792. He did it with extreme skill, which rallied around him all the votes of the society. An echo to this speech is found in an article by Prudhomme, dated the 24th of the following May. "At the sight of the first red cap on the head of a good citizen, well known as such," said he, "let us rally round him, and follow his example by wearing the cap also." Robespierre answered the letter to the President of the Jacobins in these terms :

"I respect, as does the Mayor of Paris, everything which is a symbol of liberty ; but we have a sign which brings to our mind unceasingly the oath we made to live as free men, or to die, and this is it ! (He points to his cockade.) In leaving the red cap, the citizens who took it with praiseworthy enthusiasm will lose nothing. The Friends of Liberty will still recognize each other without difficulty by the same speech, by the sign of Right and Virtue, while all other emblems can be adopted by aristocrats and traitors.

"They say it is necessary to employ fresh means to reanimate the people. No ; for the people have always kept the deepest feelings for their country. It is the

people who wait for the day for universal happiness, postponed by the faithless intrigues of those who wish to put them in fetters. It is not necessary to excite the people ; it is only necessary to see that they are protected. They are only degraded by the belief that they are sensitive to exterior signs, which could only turn away the attention which they give to the principles of liberty and to the actions of their representatives, to whom they have entrusted their destiny. I call to you, in the name of France, to the standard which alone awes the enemies of France, the only one which can rally round you all those who have been deceived by treachery. Your enemies would be glad to make you forget your dignity, to show you to the world as frivolous men given over to the spirit of faction. You must, then, decide to keep only the cockade and the flag, under which emblems the Constitution was born. . . . I support the motion of M. Pétion, and I beg that the society will order his letter to be printed and sent to all the affiliated branches, as expressing our true principles."

APPENDIX V

LETTER OF MME. DUPLAY TO HER DAUGHTER

THE letter which is here presented was not published in the "Rapport" of Courtois. Omitted or suppressed by him, it was only published in 1828 by Berville and Barrière in their complete edition of the "Rapport," vol. iii., pp. 230, 231. The letter is not dated. The editors have supplied the date in a footnote at the end of the piece: "This rough draft of a letter, written by the woman Duplay after 9 Thermidor, seems destined for her daughter." That is a statement almost as peremptory as inaccurate. In fact, the editors forgot that the woman Duplay, arrested with her family on 10 Thermidor, had been found dead on 11 Thermidor by the turnkeys of Sainte-Pélagie, as we learn from the report of the branch of Sans-Culottes, forming part of the collection of Le Bas. It seems certain that the woman Duplay would not have leisure to write to her daughter at that date. On the other hand, the text alone gives the lie to the assertion of Berville and Barrère. It speaks of the people who must rise to "overthrow all the scoundrels who did not desire the tyrant's death." Now, to whom can this grievance apply if not to the Girondins? So it is, then, in the beginning of the month of May, 1793, that we must fix the date of this letter, incontestably addressed by Mme. Duplay to her daughter Sophie, the only daughter who did not live with her:

"You remark in your last letter that you have written to me several times, and nevertheless I have only received one letter from you, since September. Your silence hurt me very much ; I thought that you had forgotten your mother. I would, however, have sent you my news ; but, knowing that your brothers had written to you, I waited until you should remember me again.

"Here we are in perpetual fear : our treacherous representatives, far from concerning themselves with the happiness of the people and with putting new-born Liberty on a solid basis, are, on the contrary, seeking to degrade and stifle it. The voice of Truth can no longer be heard in the Convention, so scoundrelism is at its height there. The few patriots who have remained pure have fought with courage up to now, but I see them on the point of giving in, and liberty on the point of being destroyed for ever, if the people do not rise 'to overthrow all the scoundrels who did not desire the tyrant's death.' What further shall I tell you ? Even Giraud has left the people's cause to place himself beside rogues, and he is not the least among them.

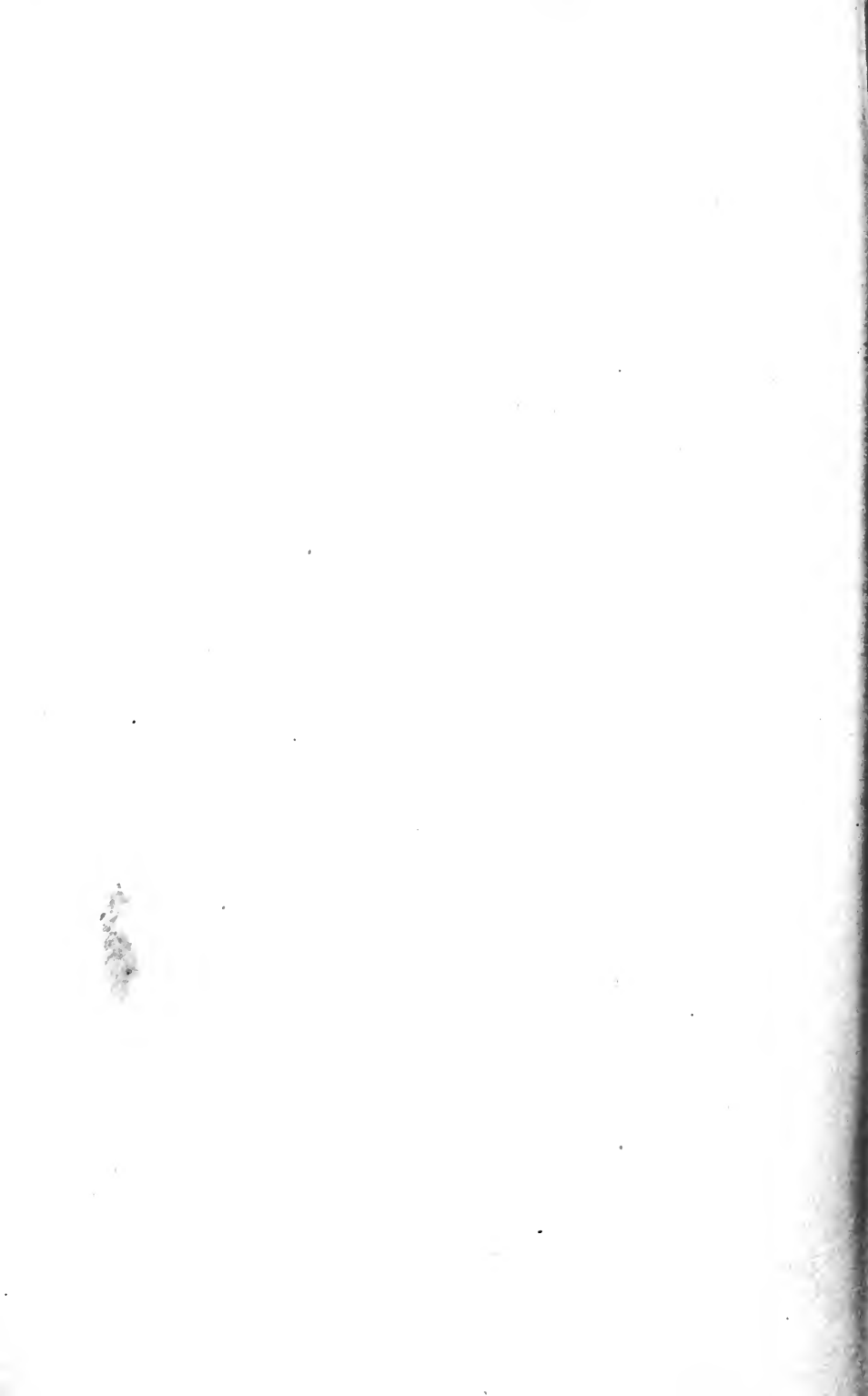
"That is how we stand : add to that the disorder of our affairs ; your father has been obliged to take to his trade again. Not one of our houses is let, but we would not mind that if something came of this for the public interest. . . ."

This letter does not contradict what Fabian Pillet, the Secretary of the Committee of Public Safety, said of Mme. Duplay—namely, that since Robespierre had gone to live in her house she had been actively interested in politics, and that the galleries of the Jacobin Club and the Convention had no more faithful frequenter.



PAUL BARRAS

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APPENDIX VI

VISIT OF CORRUPT MEN TO THE INCORRUPTIBLE

THERE is a passage in the "Mémoires" of Barras, besides the details reported by a man of Thermidor of the trap of 9 Thermidor, which is very important for the intimate study of Robespierre.

It is a story told by the old Director of a visit to the house of the Incorruptible with Fréron. Fréron and he decided on this visit on their return from that cynical and scandalous mission to the South to prevent or avoid the accusing thunderbolts which threatened them. The two accomplices went to coax Robespierre, who knew of their robbery and how they made capital of terrorism. This is how he received them :

"I had only remarked Robespierre very slightly on the benches or in the passages of the Convention.

"His cold attitude, his resistance to all attention, had kept me full of that reserve which my own pride dictated to me towards my equal. Fréron attached much importance to this step, for our tranquillity. We arrived at Robespierre's house. It is a little house situated in the Rue Saint-Honoré, nearly opposite the Rue Florentin ; I believe the house has disappeared to-day because of the opening of the Rue Duphot which was made at this spot. This house was occupied and possessed by a certain building carpenter called Duplay. This carpenter, a member of the Club;

of Jacobins, had met Robespierre there. He was, with the rest of his family, full of enthusiasm for the popular orator, and had the honour to lodge and feed him at his table. In his leisure moments Robespierre made notes on the 'Émile' of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and explained it to the carpenter's children, as a good village priest explains the Gospel to his parishioners. Moved and touched by his evangelical attention, the children and the boys in the workshop of the honest artisan did not allow the object of their worship to go out without accompanying him through the streets as far as the National Convention, to defend his precious life, which his usual cowardice and the flattery of his courtiers began to see threatened by the attacks of the aristocracy against the incorruptible tribune of the people.

"To get at so eminent a guest who deigned to live in such a hole of a place, it was necessary to cross a long passage decorated with planks, destined for use in the carpenter's shop. This passage led to a little yard about seven or eight feet in length and breadth, covered with planks in the same fashion. A small wooden staircase led to a room on the first-floor. Before going up the staircase we saw in the yard the daughter of the carpenter Duplay, the proprietor of the house. This girl did not give up to anyone the pleasure of taking care of Robespierre.

"As women of this kind mixed themselves in public opinion, and this girl had very strong opinions, Danton had named her Cornélie Copeau, she who was not the mother of the Gracchi. Cornélie seemed to have just finished hanging out the linen in the yard : she held a pair of striped cotton stockings in her hand ; such were in the fashion then, and they were very surely those which we saw every day on Robespierre's legs when he appeared at the Convention. On the other side,

the mother Duplay, seated between a bucket and a salad-bowl, was picking over the herbs. Two men in military dress, and in an attitude of respect, seemed to be united in this domestic work, and amiably helped with the salad picking, so as to be able to speak more freely under the cover of this familiarity. These two soldiers, both afterwards celebrated in different positions, were General Danican, who has since believed himself to be a Royalist of 13 Vendémiaire, and who perhaps believes himself to be so still, because he is pensioned by England ; and the General, since Marshal, Brune.

“Fréron and I told Cornélie Copeau that we had come to visit Robespierre. She began by answering that he was not at home ; then she asked us if he expected us. Fréron, who knew the place, went on towards the staircase. The mother made signs to her daughter to prevent him going in. The two Generals themselves, in unison, and smiling at the thought of the two women, looking alternately at us and at them—told them that he was not there, and to us that he was. Cornélie Copeau, seeing that Fréron insisted and had gone up the steps, placed herself before him, and said : ‘Well, I will go and announce you.’ And from the bottom of the staircase, walking hurriedly all the time, she called out : ‘It is Fréron and his friend, whose name I do not know !’ Fréron said, ‘It is Barras and Fréron,’ as if announcing himself ; and passing the entrance door of Robespierre’s room, which was just opened by Cornélie Copeau, we followed her immediately. Robespierre was standing up, wrapped in a sort of shirt dressing-gown. His hairdresser had just gone, and his hair was dressed and powdered. The spectacles which he generally wore were not on his nose ; and through the powder which covered his face, already so white—he was always pallid—we saw two dim eyes which

we had never seen save through the veil of his glasses. These eyes looked at us fixedly, and were quite astonished at our appearance. We greeted him in our fashion, with no embarrassment and with the simplicity of the times. He did not return our salutation, but turned to his looking-glass, hanging on the window towards the yard ; then to a little glass which was supposed to ornament his mantelpiece, but which was no decoration. He took his toilet-knife and scraped the powder which hid his face, respecting the corners of his head-dress. He took off his dressing-gown, which he placed on a chair near us, in a manner which might have soiled our clothes, without making any excuse, and without seeming to pay any attention to our presence. He washed himself in a sort of basin, which he held in his hand ; he cleaned his teeth, spat several times on the ground at our feet, without giving us any sign of attention, and nearly as straight as Potemkin, who, as one knows, did not give himself the trouble to turn his head, and without warning or precaution spat in the face of those who happened to be there. This ceremony finished, Robespierre did not address a single word to us. Fréron thought that he could now begin, and he presented me, saying : ‘ Here is my colleague Barras, who was more instrumental than I or any other soldier in the taking of Toulon. We did our duty at the peril of our life on the field of battle, as we shall do it in the Convention. It is painful when one is as obliging as we are, not only not to receive justice, but to see ourselves the object of the most iniquitous accusations and the most monstrous slanders. We are sure that, at the least, those who know us as you do, Robespierre, will give us justice, and we will demand it for ourselves.’

“ Robespierre kept silence ; but Fréron thought he saw by a shade on his motionless features that the

'theeing and thouing' a continuation of the old revolutionary custom, was displeasing to him; and, continuing with his talk, he found means to substitute the word 'you,' to reconcile himself with the susceptible proud personage. Robespierre let no expression of satisfaction be seen. He was standing, and remained standing, without begging us to be seated. I told him politely that our application to him was one of esteem, won by his political principles. He did not answer a word, or allow me to pick out a single sign of feeling in his face. I never saw anything so impassible in the frozen marble of statues or in the face of the dead already buried. . . . That was our interview with Robespierre. I cannot call it a conversation, since he did not open his mouth to speak; he pressed his lips together—they were always thin—and between them I saw a kind of bilious foam which was not reassuring. I had had quite enough. I have since seen that with much justice he has been called the 'Tiger-Cat.' "

Without laying stress on certain details or on the evident determination of others to depict Robespierre as the true prototype of coarseness and impoliteness, we are bound to recognize that this is one of the most striking sketches drawn of the Incorruptible at home.

APPENDIX VII

MME. DE CHALABRE AFTER 9 THERMIDOR

(Unpublished Documents)

THE unpublished fragments which we have collected together may throw some light on the shadow which envelops the life of Robespierre's admirer after the death of the Incorruptible. She was not arrested, as has been supposed, on 10 or 11 Thermidor, but on 22 Thermidor, according to a warrant taken out by the Committee of General Safety in these terms :

“ 22 Thermidor.

“ The Committee resolve that the woman named Chalabre who frequented the house of Robespierre shall be placed immediately under arrest at Pélagie.

“ (Signed) LOUIS (of the Lower Rhine).

MERLIN.

VADIER.

ÉLIE LACOSTE.

LEGENDRE.

DUBARRAN.

GOUPILLEAU.

“ In accordance with copy.

“ BOURGUIGNON.”

We are ignorant as to where the agents of the new police put the warrants to execution, but the documents in another portfolio may give some indications on the point. We mean that relating to the printer Nicholas, juryman in the Revolutionary Tribunal, arrested on 9 Thermidor as Robespierrist. Nicholas lived in the Rue Saint-Honoré. When

anyone visited him, they were sure to find Mme. de Chalabre in one of his rooms : "Saying that she was at home in the house of the said Nicholas"—so reads an inscription on a packet of papers which were seized. It follows from this that Robespierre's friend lodged with this Nicholas. Probably she was there on 22 Thermidor, when she was arrested. Conducted to the Talaru house, Rue de la Loi, formerly Rue Richelieu, she did not remain there long. In fact, four days later the police officials announced her transference to Sainte-Pélagie. Here is their letter :

*"Commune of Paris, Department of Reformed Police,
26 Thermidor, Year II. of the French Republic,
one and indivisible. To the Representatives of the
People composing the Committee of Public Safety.*

"CITIZENS,—In execution of your warrant of the 22nd of this month, we have ordered the said Chalabre to be arrested. She was conducted at first to the house of detention of the Rue de la Loi, and was then transferred to Pélagie, where she is now actually detained.

"GERÔME } the officials of
LECAMUS } the reformed police."

At Sainte-Pélagie the prisoner made no stay. She was again transferred, and sent to the Bourbe, or Port-Libre. Weeks and months pass by. Little by little the prison becomes empty ; the prisoners have regained their liberty. She alone remains. That state of affairs continues until Pluviôse of year III.—seven months. Then she decides to demand her liberty. Her letter is among the papers, and proves how little confidence we can have in her protestations to the Incorruptible. She has lied, because a woman and weak, and her idol falls from its pedestal ; she even

calls him "scoundrel." There is nothing of the Spartan in this, we must confess, which proves how wrong it would be to judge Mme. de Chalabre, as M. Hamel has done, from the documents collected by Berville and Barrière. It is chance which has taken the guilt from her halo. She writes :

" PARIS, 29 *Pluviôse*, Year III. of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

" REPRESENTATIVE CITIZENS,

"The woman Chalabre, a prisoner for seven months, without knowing any reason for her detention, except that of having been a neighbour of the scoundrel Robespierre, and in whose house, after the most careful search, nothing was found which could give rise to the least suspicion, states that, forty-three years of age, burdened since her youth by the effects of suppressed scurvy and other illnesses, which have considerably increased with age and since her imprisonment, desires aid and attentions which she cannot receive in a house of detention. She begs for justice, and relies on the humanity of the members of the Committee of Public Safety ; and she thinks she ought to remark that a house she bought and restored at great cost is falling into ruin, having neither doors nor windows, and needs her attentions.

" CHALABRE."

She had this scurvy and illnesses examined by Dr. Thibault, and sends the certificate with the letter. The document also proves that Mme. de Chalabre was no longer in her first youth, and gives, in the absence of the precise date of her birth, a useful indication.

"I, the undersigned doctor, have given medical attendance to the woman Chalabre for twenty years.

I bear witness that all she says in the present *mémoire* of her illnesses and their cause is true, and that they could only be increased by her detention, particularly at her time of life.

“At Paris, 30 Pluviôse, year III. of the Republican Era.

“THIBAUT.”

Neither the “scurvy” nor the house in ruin influenced the Committee of Public Safety. The petition was left without an answer, and Mme. de Chalabre expiated for five months longer, in the Luxembourg and at the Plessis, her enthusiasm for the “divine” Robespierre. She was not made of the same material as Mme. de Staël.

APPENDIX VIII

ROBESPIERRE AND SUZETTE LABROUSSE

THE mixing up of Robespierre with mystic religious farces began in 1790. Marchant had preceded the followers of Voltaire in this manner. The *Chronique du Manège* published "The Loves of Dom Gerle," which gives a part to Robespierre. The Jacobins decide who is to marry Suzette Labrousse.

The works and prophecies of Mlle. de la Brousse, announcing the end of the world, and two interesting letters about her imprisonment, were published by Broisser of Bordeaux in 1797.

APPENDIX IX

THE "MOTHER OF GOD" JUDGED BY HER NEPHEW

RAPHAEL THÉOT, nephew of Vadier's "Ridiculous Pagoda," was arrested simply because he was of the same family. When in prison he sent petition after petition to the Committee of Public Safety. There are ten in the National Archives. The petition quoted is biographical, and throws light on his past life. He talks of his aunt (father's sister) Catherine Théot—that woman who had the simple mind necessary to believe all the foolishnesses and extravagances of Sainte-Catherine of Siena and Sainte-Theresa. She imagined herself to be the bride of Christ.

APPENDIX X

ACT OF ACCUSATION AGAINST CÉCILE RENAULT AND HER FAMILY

DECREE OF CONVENTION OF 26 PRAIRIAL, YEAR II.

FOUQUIER-TINVILLE put to their trial the queer batch of the Foreigner's Conspiracy.

The attempt of the girl Renault, to assassinate *Robespierre* (*sic*), acknowledged by her with impudence. The Renaults, father and son, both accomplices in the plot. Her aunt, an ex-nun, was instigator. The old story of Pitt employing priests and ex-nuns against the liberty of the French people.

APPENDIX XI

TWO THERMIDORIAN PAMPHLETS AGAINST ROBESPIERRE

A GREAT quantity of anonymous pamphlets were written after the death of Robespierre. All seem to follow the report in the newspapers of the sitting of the 9th and the events of the night, and the article of the Abbé Suard in *New Politics*. Some add Barras' speech. They use alluring titles—"Great Conspiracy," "True Portrait"—generally printed on bad paper. No reason to repeat history of 9th and 10th. (Vadier's pamphlet was responsible for the other that followed on the *affaire Théot*.) Merlin de Thionville published a pamphlet against Robespierre—"Portrait of Robespierre"—but Roederer claims that he is the author of it, and only allowed it to be printed under the name of Merlin de Thionville to give greater weight to the thing.

As to the second, it was the usual jest of the period : "The Will of I. M. Robespierre, found at the House of the Commune." It is of no value and anonymous.

CAPET AND ROBESPIERRE.

"In 1789 there was in France a King whose power was limited in appearance, but in reality boundless—a King who was supported by old prejudices, but above all by the faculty he possessed of disposing of all the funds and all the offices in the State.

"He had at his command, consequently, an army composed of all those who liked to receive money without earning it, and posts without deserving them.

"His authority was upheld by all who pillaged in his name, judged in his name, and imprisoned in his name.

"Also when friends of liberty attacked the throne, when under their attack it began to shake, then all the stipendaries of the throne, priests, nobles, and financiers, formed a coalition to support their master and maintain an authority so useful to them.

"In the year II. there was in France a man whose power was also absolute in reality, limited in appearance, supported by a popularity acquired who knows how, and who enjoyed a fictitious reputation for uprightness and ability, as so many other Princes have enjoyed.

"This man disposed of all the funds and offices of the republic.

"He was consequently supported by all who wished to receive money without earning it, and posts without deserving them.

"Also, when the friends of liberty attacked his authority, all his courtiers, all those who pillaged, who imprisoned, who killed in his name, formed a coalition to revive his authority.

"The tyrant of 1789 had his bastilles, his parliaments, his agents.

"The tyrant of the year II. had his prisons, his agents, his flatterers, his committees, and, worse than all, his Revolutionary Tribunal.

"The tyrant of 1789 imprisoned all whose influence and lights he dreaded ; he treated them as dangerous men. He imposed silence on philosophers, and would have liked to put chains on thought.

"The tyrant of the year II. imprisoned all who

would not obey him ; he treated them as suspicious men ; he forbade both writings and speech.

“ Both men dreaded the light, which sooner or later leads nations back to liberty.

“ Both shrouded themselves in darkness. The secret of State was their watchword, and public safety was the hackneyed pretext of all their crimes, of all their murders.

“ Both submitted to censure all books, plays, and newspapers. None could write but by permission and by privilege.

“ Both invoked the sanction of heaven for an authority which desolated the earth. One spoke of God and the future life, the other of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul.

“ The tyrant of 1789 sowed on all sides the seed of distrust, division, and unrest ; an inquisitional system of espionage prevailed everywhere.

“ The tyrant of the year II. sowed everywhere the seed of anxiety, division, and distrust ; he had spies on all sides, even in the prisons.

“ In 1789 the King's word was law.

“ In the year II. the order of a man or of his council was law.

“ In neither period was anything done in the name of law.

“ In 1789 it was forbidden to speak ill of the King or of his mistresses, or of the mistresses of his courtiers.

“ Anyone who threw doubt on the divinity of the King of the year II., or of that of his colleagues, or of Cornélie Copeau, was punished by death.

“ In 1789, as in the year II., the reigning tyrant desired, it was said, the happiness—even the liberty—of the people, and the tranquillity of the State ; and in 1789, as in the year II., France lay in the repose of death.

“ Those who in 1789 were opposed to the humiliation or the destruction of royalty proclaimed loudly

that they were acting in the interest of the people, and not of the King.

"Those who in the year II. opposed the destruction of the tyrant were defending, if we choose to believe them, neither a man nor men, but the happiness and liberty of the people.

"The opponents of the revolution of 1789 were called aristocrats ; the opponents of the revolution of the year II., are they not real aristocrats ?

"Both one and the other defend and support tyranny and arbitrary power.

"Both allow that there were abuses—they seem, indeed, willing to allow certain reforms ; but when they are questioned, when they are pressed, one sees that they wish the abuses removed only if tyranny, the mother of all abuses, is allowed to remain.

"Let us glance at the list of aristocrats of 1789 ; one sees the names of men whose prejudices, whose habits, and above all whose interests, endear them to tyranny.

"It is precisely the same with the aristocrats of the year II. If a list were made, one would find there ex-Counts, ex-Marquises, knights of industry, of the sword, of the guillotine, cut-throats, brothers and friends of the aristocrats of 1789.

"However disinterested they professed to be, one feels that both the one and the other profited by the abuses of tyranny, and that they were touched in a sensitive spot.

"However far apart they may appear to be, they are at heart the same party : the one adopted an external policy, which proved unsuccessful ; the other an internal policy, equally unsuccessful.

"When you find men with the same interests, the same projects, the same policy, the same principles, and even the same language, they are obviously of one and the same party.

"The patriots of 1789 destroyed, at peril of their

lives, the Bastille, royalty and the throne, and consequently arbitrary power.

“The patriots of the year II. risked the same dangers to destroy prisons, Robespierre, and consequently arbitrary power.

“The patriots of 1789 wished to be governed by laws, and not by a man or men.

“The patriots of the year II. had no other wish.

“The aristocrats of the year II. boast of the necessary severity of their tribunals, the necessary vigilance of their commissions; the aristocrats of 1789 spoke of the necessary severity of their parliaments, the necessary vigilance of their police.

“The aristocrats of 1789 wished to restore tyranny by disorderly methods; they gave no heed to the claims of the patriots. It is the same with the aristocrats of the year II.

“To defend the tyranny of 1789, the aristocrats boasted of all the good derived from it.

“The aristocrats of the year II. claim the same for their tyranny.

“Neither the one nor the other will admit that all the evil is the work of tyranny, and all the good is the work of the people and their friends.

“Until the year 1789 to whom were due in France all masterpieces of every description? To the servants of tyranny? No, to her enemies.

“During the last two years who has been victorious on all sides? The servants of tyranny? No, her enemies.

“Let them point to one statue, one work, one book, one drama, produced in any age by those on whom tyranny has conferred exclusive privileges.

“The tyrants of 1789 and those of the year II. overwhelmed agriculture and commerce with obstacles, and treated as rebels those who opposed them and

refused respectfully to embrace their chains ; to this is due the prodigious increase in the price of food.

“ One could push the comparison farther, but the conclusion is this : The aristocrats of 1789, in opposing the revolution, accelerated it, led the people to liberty, and prepared their own ruin.

“ The aristocrats of the year II., in opposing the revolution, accelerate it ; they are leading the people to victory, and preparing their own ruin. The hour has come !

“ Courage then, patriots, courage !

“ MERLIN DE THIONVILLE.”

THE WILL OF I. M. ROBESPIERRE, FOUND IN THE MAISON COMMUNE.

Everyone knows that on the night of 9-10 Thermidor, when the Jacobin Commune was nearing ruin, Robespierre left for a moment the chamber where the General Council was sitting. Everyone knows that he shot himself ; but what everyone does not know, and what I now make public, is that before firing the fatal shot, not wishing to die *ab intestat*, he wrote his will.

In the confusion inseparable from such a scene the will was not found ; but it was discovered later, and I consider it my duty to publish it.

ROBESPIERRE'S WILL.

“ Although my old friends, my most zealous partisans, have abandoned me, have overwhelmed me at a moment when I most needed their services, I pardon them. An instant's weakness does not obliterate from my heart the services of six months. I intend this will to be an unmistakable proof of my friendship and gratitude.

“ I leave my soul to the Supreme Being. It would

be ungrateful of Him not to receive it, since I have graciously recognized Him.

“Like a new Elias, instead of my coat, which I might not be able to dispose of, I leave my wit to my well-beloved disciple, Billaud-Varennes; of all my proselytes, he seems to be the most promising.

“Item: to David the care to pass my features on to posterity.

“Item: to Duhem my talent for silently preparing great measures, and of turning out of the Jacobins any honest man who does not please him.

“I swear—and at one’s last hour one does not lie—that I had no ambition to ascend the throne. I aimed at the dictatorship. I therefore bequeath to Bourdon de l’Oise the care to rehabilitate my memory by proposing the establishment of a dictatorship in France.

“I recommend my friend Fouquier to send in the names inscribed on the list I have given him ten years in advance; and, to make this easier for him, I charge my faithful Barère to continue him in his office of Public Prosecutor; and I bequeath to Collot d’Herbois the duty of drawing up the lists. This will come easy to him after his brilliant apprenticeship at Lyons.

“To punish the Parisians for their ingratitude towards me, I wish to deprive them of the means of subsistence. I charge Carrier to cause them to die of thirst by rendering the water of the Seine undrinkable by the secret means he knows so well.

“As I know Louchet has a talent for elocution, I charge him to deliver the Parisian addresses of the departmental societies, who shall demand that I be transferred to the Pantheon, and my system re-established.

“I leave my eloquence to Fayau, although he chose the moment of my fall to give me the last kick.

“My brilliance at the feast of the Supreme Being will be remembered; well, I leave all my glory to

Bernard de Saintes, who will appear as my majestic heir at the feast of the Sans-Culottides.

"A very large syringe will be found in my wardrobe. I make a present of it to Levasseur ; he will make use of it to give the French people an injection comprising six grains of lies, fifteen of impudence, ten of villainy, all melted in several pints of blood ; and if this remedy does not suffice, Duhem can order various bleedings.

"I leave Vadier the pistol with which I am about to blow out my brains ; I foresee that the occasion is not far distant when he will be compelled to make pretence of using it.

"If Jesus of Nazareth, who was a child compared with me, had the power to send the devil into two thousand swine, I will surely possess the power to pass into the bodies of thirty or forty Jacobin leaders ; I will breathe my words and deeds into them, and the French people will lose nothing by my death, as my blood will be fertile seed from which will spring a thousand followers of my projects.

"I bequeath to Ruamps a Lieutenant's commission in the battalion which shall avenge my death.

"I recommend in general, to all my dear pupils, to distrust the crowd of moderates whose appetite is not sharpened by a goblet of blood. I exhort them to ban, and assassinate, the impious crowd who oppose their plans, and wish to replace terror by justice. Above all, let them not spare either Merlin de Thionville, and much less Lecointre and Tallien, whom my ghost will never pardon for daring the first to attack me face to face.

"There is among my papers a revolutionary catechism ; I recommend my dear successors to read and practise it. They will find there how the rich, the merchants, and the scholars, should be treated.

"I would finish by acts of benevolence. My col-

leagues will no doubt have remarked at their side the discreet Armonville, deputy from Rheims, who has never opened his mouth at the Assembly but to yawn. This worthy deputy, formerly a wool-carder, has worn for the last ten years the same red woollen cap. I bequeath him my hat.

"Item: I leave my trousers to Granet. Poor devil! he needs them.

"Item: to Adouin several reams of paper, on condition that he writes my funeral oration, combating the principles which I stifled during the last months of my life.

"Finally, to give all my brave lieutenants some rallying sign, I bequeath them my pigtail as a flag.

"I. M. ROBESPIERRE."

As he finished he heard a noise, and shot himself.

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